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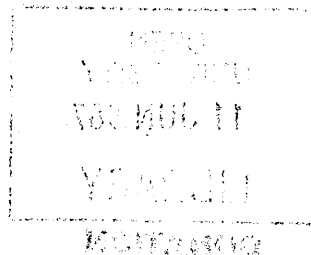
THE INFLUENCE OF CHURCH AND DISSENT

A thesis submitted to the Open University, Faculty of Arts,
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy, in the discipline of History by

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C O N T E N T S

Abstract

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SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE CUCKMERE VALLEY 1660-1780:

THE INFLUENCE OF CHURCH AND DISSENT

A B S T R A C T

This isolated area of East Sussex was divided into Weald and Downland, each with a separate agricultural economy. In the Weald, radical theological views had been denounced before the Reformation, but in the whole area religion was a divisive factor in neighbourhood relationships after the Restoration, when Baptists, Quakers and Presbyterians held meetings, according to their zealous beliefs, and were persecuted by members of the Established Church. Their numbers declined slowly after the Toleration Act had provided limited concessions. Most Quakers disappeared by 1710; other sects lingered on. A Calvinist revival after 1760 produced renewed animosity.

Despite their former Parliamentary affiliations, the Pelhams (magnate landowners living near the Cuckmere) conformed and became the arbiters of behaviour and county leaders. Elevated to the peerage in the eighteenth century, they figured as national statesmen whose continuing patronage and manipulation of freeholders and local clergy declined before 1770. The clergy, although not debauched or ill-educated, suffered from episcopal indifference (as did their churches and parsonages). Almost all were gentlemen or scholars, increasingly aloof from

parishioners, particularly where ill-endowed livings necessitated absenteeism.

In the absence of the clergy, the chief representatives of the Church were often the churchwardens. They and the parish overseers tackled, with honesty and a reasonable amount of compassion, the difficult task of caring for growing numbers of the suffering poor - children being particularly vulnerable. Paupers, due to financial and administrative problems, were gradually alienated from fellow parishioners. Increasing taxation and the need for agrarian improvement caused the decline of smallholders and the de-population of Downland villages. Farms (Wealden as well as Downland) became larger and, by 1780, gentry landowners or tenant farmers (many of whom achieved social elevation) held the chief parochial offices, exercising social control on behalf of the church. The polarisation of society was evident.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
DWL	Doctor Williams' Library
EHR	Economic History Review
ROHAS	Rape of Hastings Architectural Survey
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office
SAC	Sussex Archaeological Collections
SAS	Sussex Archaeological Society
SCM	Sussex County Magazine
SFH	Sussex Family Historian
SGLH	Sussex Genealogist & Local Historian
SRS	Sussex Record Society
PRO	Public Record Office
VCH	Victoria County History
WSRO	West Sussex Record Office

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F O R E W O R D

One of the more important issues to be resolved at the Restoration was the religious settlement. Since it was known that dissent flourished in the Cuckmere Valley, the area promised interesting opportunities for research into local reactions to the settlement and its aftermath. The varied soils and topography of which Eastern Sussex is composed - the Downland, the Low Weald and the High Weald are all to be found within the Cuckmere Valley and, as each of these areas developed different agricultural and commercial economies, it was expected that social conditions might vary from locality to locality.

Although the Cuckmere flowed through a totally rural area, events in the valley often reflected national trends. The Church of England emerged from the Civil War and Interregnum with an enormous inferiority complex. It had to rebuild, but made no attempt to strengthen itself from within by closer supervision and support of the lesser clergy. Instead it encouraged the persecution of all deviants, which led to divisions in local communities and affected neighbourhood relationships. Although events during and following the reign of James II emasculated the supremacy of the Established Church and allowed limited concessions to dissenters, an unexpected result

was the slow decline of religious fervour and the temporary disappearance of dissent in the area. After the early years of the eighteenth century politics became a more important factor in people's lives.

In a classic period of church decline, the dilution of religious energy in the upper echelons of the Church of England was reflected in the neglect of Cuckmere churches and parsonages. As was the case elsewhere in the country, the higher clergy showed little interest in the area, many of them being intent upon furthering their careers. The gap between the higher and lower clergy widened. The fortunes of the lesser clergy were dependent upon the size and economic potential of their parishes and, in the Cuckmere Valley, varied greatly from Downland to Weald. Yet it was obvious that in this area, at least, the 18th century clergy were not ignorant or debauched. Their sins - such as absenteeism - were those of omission rather than commission. In the absence of the clergy, parochial leadership devolved upon parish officers.

Power and authority was increasingly vested in the hands of the larger landowners. In the Cuckmere it was the Pelhams who were the most conveniently situated family. As former Parliamentarians, but not regicides, they were well placed to accept opportunities in local power-sharing (advocated at the Restoration as an antidote to regal supremacy) and national government.

Their elevation to the peerage early in the eighteenth century coincided with the period of Whig supremacy. To further his parliamentary interest, Thomas Pelham Holles, Duke of Newcastle, offered patronage and rewards to Cuckmere clergy and freeholders, this being one of the areas in the country where this renowned manipulator had special influence.

Under Charles II the nation had embarked on a policy of empire building and mercantilism, leading to increased overseas trade, greater specialisation in industry - which may have been a factor leading to the decline of the local iron and clothmaking industries - and, as the population grew, a need for agricultural improvement. It was the latter which most affected the area.

The eighteenth century was an age of aspiration. The debate about the nature of the elite at this period is of particular interest, for in the Cuckmere upward mobility was available to those with enterprise, ability and ambition and opportunities were seized by enterprising tenant farmers and acute yeomen and traders, who achieved financial success and social elevation. Less go-ahead smallholders and owner occupiers, trammelled by increasing taxation were bought out. The social gap between the rich and the poor widened and Downland villages became de-populated.

The Act of Settlement of 1662 had increased the

responsibilities of local parish officers with regard to the poor. It also decreased employment opportunities for paupers, since it was difficult for them to leave the parish in search of work. The task of supervising them and other paupers, both able-bodied and impotent, organised through the Church, became more onerous. Yet, in this area, parish officers were not cruel and heartless rogues, but did their best in difficult circumstances and with little supervision to relieve the suffering of less fortunate neighbours, although among the increasing poor, children were extremely vulnerable. By the 1760's national concern about the treatment of the poor was evident but, against the problem of rising population, produced little relief, while legislation tended to isolate the poor. Due to financial stress, fewer men were capable of undertaking parish office, and the polarisation of local communities, already divided by religious differences, increased.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE CUCKMERE

The Cuckmere River

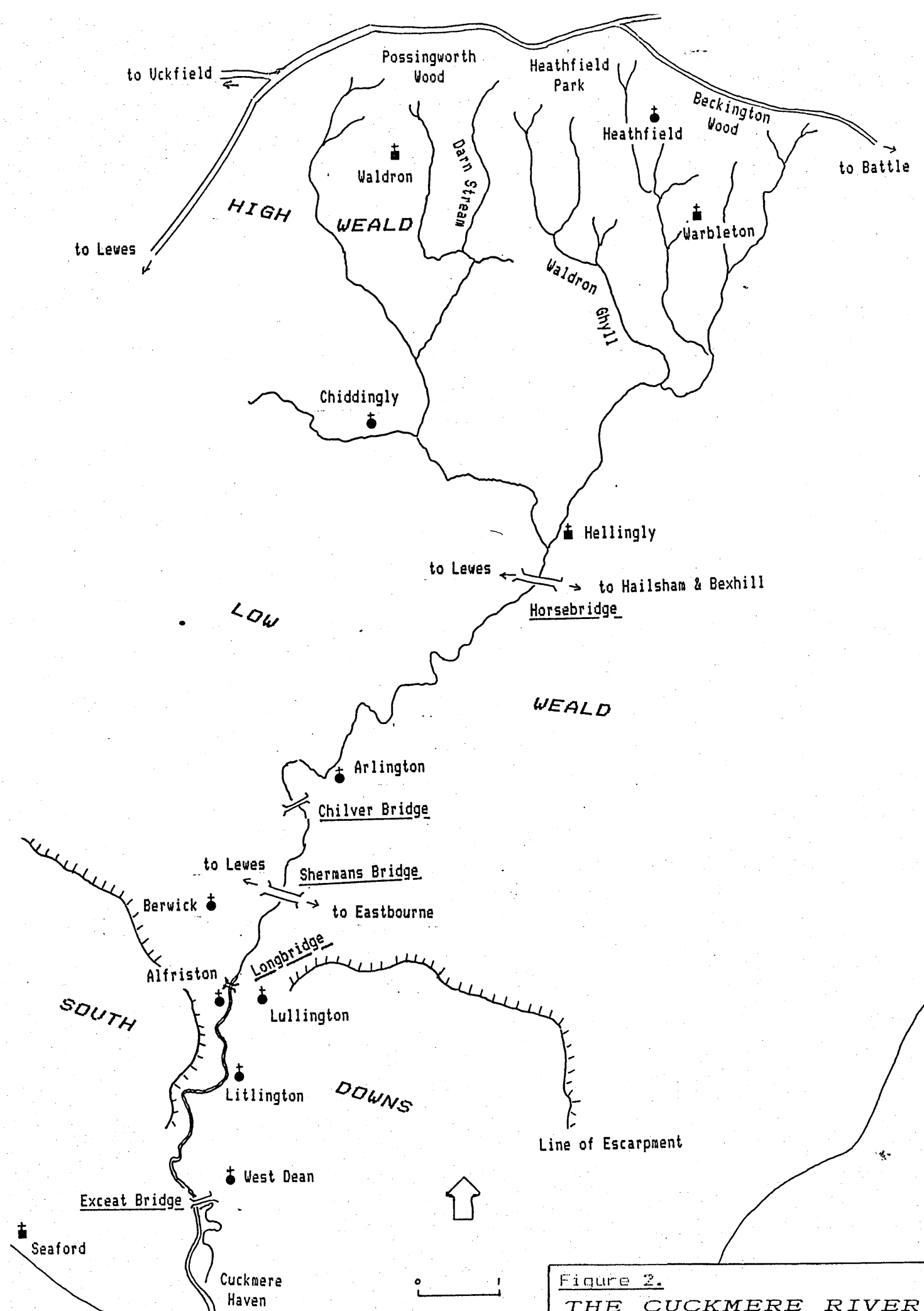
The Cuckmere is the smallest of four south-flowing Sussex rivers. It is twenty-four miles in length and has a catchment basin covering seventy-five square miles.(1) It flows through varied landscapes in a county currently renowned for the beauty of its scenery. The immediate catchment area of the Cuckmere River includes land in twelve ancient parishes - Seaford, West Dean, Alfriston, Lullington, Litlington, Arlington, Berwick, Chiddingly, Hellingly, Waldron, Heathfield and Warbleton.(Fig 1) Saxon administrative areas, called rapes in Sussex, were systematically re-organised by the Normans into the manorial system and were based on a fortified town. Each rape possessed a river and in the western rapes - Lewes, Bramber and Arundel - the fortified town stood on a river. In eastern Sussex the fortified towns of Pevensey and Hastings were situated on the coast, some distance from a river. The Cuckmere, the main river in Pevensey Rape, rises in, or flows through all the parishes in the study, and all these parishes are in Pevensey Rape, with the exception of Warbleton and Heathfield, which are in the Rape of Hastings.

[illegible]

The Cuckmere river has three main sources. (Fig.2)

They rise in the Uckfield-Rye ridgeway, which surmounts the northerly regions of the high-wealden parishes of Heathfield, Warbleton and Waldron. The area is heavily wooded, crossed by steep-sided ghylls, with a mixed sandstone and clay soil. Here, the streams frequently run bright orange, thick with deposits of ore, washed from the ironstone embedded in layers of Wadhurst clay. The main branch of the Cuckmere rises in Heathfield and meets a tributary from Warbleton in the extreme south of Warbleton parish. The Waldron branch, called the Darne, flows southwards and unites with the Heathfield-Warbleton stream in the parish of Hellingly. Hellingly, Chiddingly and Arlington are situated mainly on the clay plain of the low weald. From Hellingly the river flows towards the sea in a south-westerly direction and, just south of Berwick - a scarp foot zone parish - it breaks through the south downs between Alfriston and Lullington. These parishes, together with Litlington, West Dean and Seaford are situated on the chalk downs. The Cuckmere flows into the English Channel about half-way between Newhaven and Beachy Head.

Because of the south-westerly direction of the prevailing wind, the Sussex coastline has changed considerably during the historic period. At Cuckmere Haven the shingle beach has always drifted eastwards and the chalk cliffs have always been subject to erosion. The mouth of the river has constantly moved towards Haven Brow, the most westerly of the Seven Sisters. Although the estuary was



Parish	Area in acres	Locality	Chief Soil Types	Population in 1801	Ironworks	Open/ Closed
Alfriston	2445	Downs	Chalk	576	-----	Open
Arlington	5232	Low Weald Downs/Scarp	Clay Chalk in S	472	-----	Open
Berwick	1104	Downs Scarp Foot	Chalk Clay in N	170	-----	Closed
Chiddingly	4481	Low Weald	Clay Sand in N	673	Furnace & Forge Working 1673	Open
Heathfield	8032	High Weald	Clay/Sand	1226	Furnace 1693-1780	Open
Hellingly	6050	Low Weald	Clay/Gravel	936	-----	Open
Litlington	904	Downs	Chalk	111	-----	Closed
Lullington	1157	Downs	Chalk	32	-----	Closed
Seaford	2344	Downs	Chalk	847	-----	Open
Waldron	6244	High Weald	Clay/Sand	752	Furnace Working 1716	Open
Warbleton	5986	High Weald	Clay/Sand	908	Not working after 1660	Open
West Dean	2268	Downs	Chalk	88	-----	Closed

Figure 2.
THE CUCKMERE RIVER

referred to as Cuckmere Haven in 1423 and the harbour was 'more or less capable of receiving a medieval fleet,' it appears that there was never a properly constructed harbour and the mouth of the river was frequently blocked by drifting shingle.(2) Navigation was difficult and dangerous and even the beach was an uncertain harbourage.

Agriculture and Industry

From the neolithic period sheep/corn husbandry was practised in the downland parishes of the Cuckmere. Sheep, usually pastured on the uplands, also performed a vital function as a 'moving dunghill' on the thin, chalky soil of the dip slopes, where arable crops were grown. When drained, the peaty brooklands beside the river were much sought after for fattening cattle. The downland area of the Cuckmere was intensively colonized in the early medieval period - in 1086 West Dean was the most prosperous and highly developed area in the valley.(3) Downland manors were farmed under the open field system. Professor Gray regarded Alfriston as one of the easternmost outposts of three-field agriculture along the south coast, but a grant of 1521 refers to the common fields of Exceat (in West Dean); a conveyance dated 1589 mentions land in 'the common fields of Milton Street' (the downland region of Arlington); there were common fields in Lullington and in Litlington, and it is evident that the common field system stretched further eastwards than Gray had thought.(4)(Fig.3)

The fourteenth century was marked by a series of

Figure 3 ANCIENT PARISHES AND MANORS IN THE LOWER CUCKMERE



disasters; a deterioration in the climate resulted in bad harvests. Seaford, co-opted as a limb of the Cinque Port of Hastings in 1229, became a target for French marauders during the wars of Edward III and suffered frequently from raids and by 1356 the town had been, 'for the most part burned down', and devastated by pestilence and the calamities of war. (5) At Sutton (in Seaford) ninety-nine acres of land were uncultivated in 1341 because of severe weather and the poverty of the inhabitants. (6) The village at Lullington suffered badly from the Black Death and many of the population died in 1349. (7) Alfriston, partly owned by the Duchy of Lancaster, was the only Cuckmere downland parish to thrive in the fourteenth century. A new church and clergy house were built soon after 1350 and in 1405 Henry IV granted to 'the King's Town of Alfriston', the right to hold a market. The town, probably benefiting from the depredations at Seaford, grew as the local market centre. In 1468 John Tanner of Arlington was paid a penny by the churchwardens 'for bargaining for nails at Alfriston.' Cloth was being manufactured in the town in 1562; in 1614 it was, apparently, a centre for money-lending as inhabitants, including several women, were indicted for usury; but by 1640, and probably earlier, Alfriston was a 'decayed market centre'. (8) Other downland parishes seem never to have recovered from the disasters of the fourteenth century. From this time, landowners tended to retain or purchase strips of peasant holdings and consolidate them into large farms. Consolidation into single ownership was

gradual, but it may have begun at Exceat in West Dean before 1404 when John Wolf had acquired five tenements; a later lease of 1527 refers to, 'six acres of arable land ... lately appointed to Thomas Markwick for the amendment and bettering of his laynes' in Exceat.(9) At Litlington the downland was divided among three landowners who owned most of the arable in 1635.(10)

This growing tendency towards enclosure and the fact that the type of husbandry practised was not labour intensive and very little craft work was available, meant that downland manors and villages were usually small.(11) In 1528 Exceat and West Dean were united as parishes, as were Sutton and Seaford in 1534.(12) Shortly afterwards Seaford suffered another major disaster, when the draining of the Ouse levels to the west of the town, resulted in the diversion of the river's outlet to the 'New Haven', so depriving the port of its harbour. In 1539 commissioners surveying the Sussex coast described Seaford haven as 'a duck pool'.(13) Fishing, which might have been expected to provide a profitable outlet in coastal parishes such as West Dean and Seaford, does not appear to have been important. In Seaford the largest boat in 1565 was a two-tonner and there were only seven fishermen in the town.(14) Evidently wrecking and smuggling were more favoured as maritime occupations in these parishes.(15)

Cattle-rearing was the traditional form of husbandry practised on the clay plain in the low-wealden parishes and,

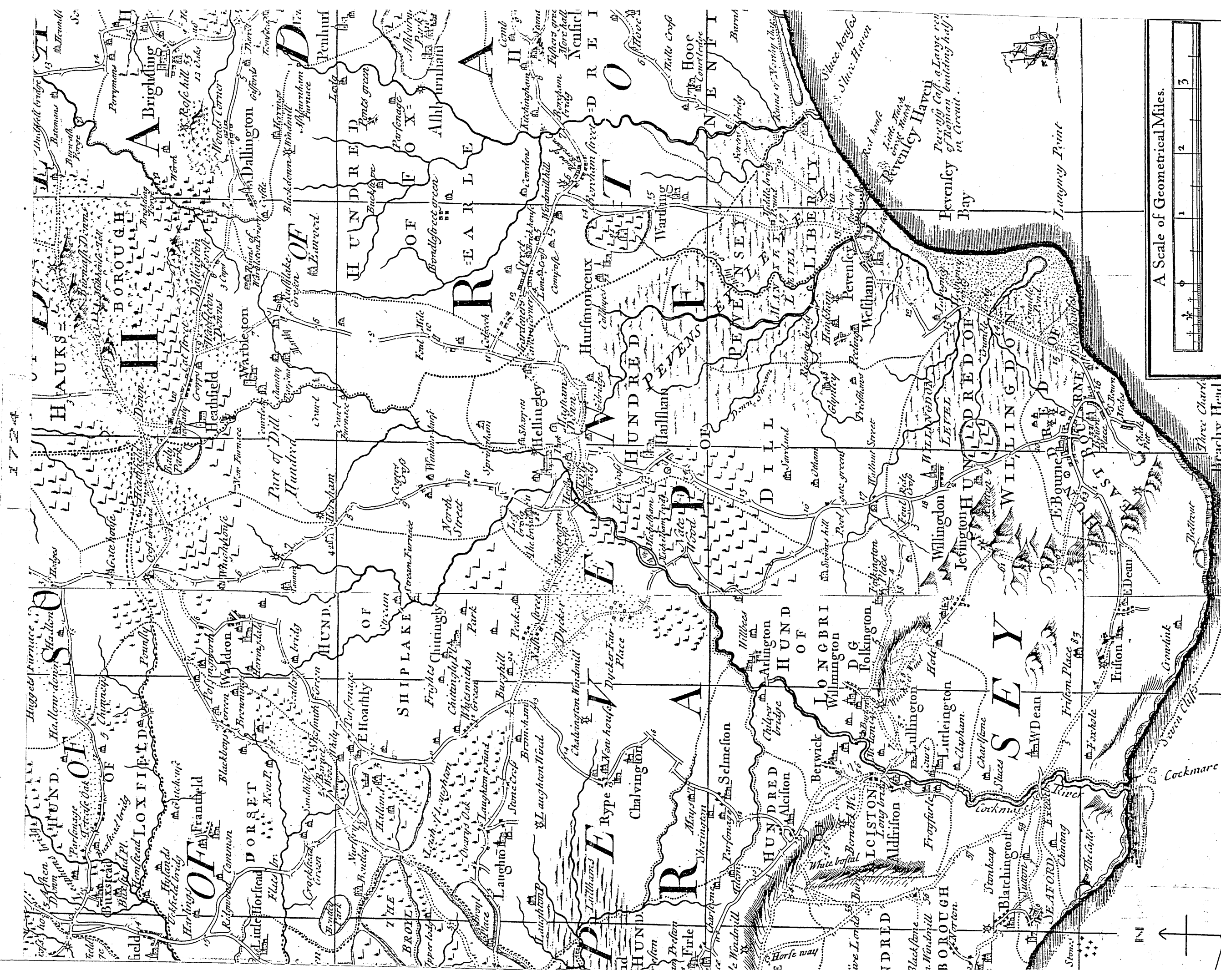
in winter, sheep from the marshland were accommodated. Arable crops were grown mainly for subsistence. In Chiddingly in 1341 the *Nonae* returns stated that there was no-one living in the parish, 'except such as live by agriculture and by their sheep.' (16) In Arlington during the fifteenth century, a herd of cattle was owned by the parish, and leased to local farmers in exchange for a supply of wax to provide candles for lighting the church. (17) A cattle market had been held at Hailsham since 1252 and when this was closed in 1634 by the grand jury at the assizes, who maintained that the roads surrounding Hailsham were in such a deplorable state that it was dangerous for people to attempt to reach the market, local farmers must have been badly affected. (18)

There is some evidence that flax was cultivated in Arlington and Hellingly but this was probably only done to provide linen for the household. Robert Stapley, yeoman of Arlington, bequeathed his wife six nayle of flax and also a hive of bees in 1667, while John Elphick, a yeoman from Milton Street in the south of the same parish left his wife 'all the yarn and linnen now at the weavers and all the flax tire now in my house,' when he died in 1669. In the same year, Richard Mepham, a brickmaker from Hellingly, requested that his linen yarn should be used to make shirts for his sons. (19) In these low-wealden parishes there was still a great deal of waste land, rich in brick earth, on Berwick Common and on the Dicker Common in Hellingly and Chiddingly and Richard Mepham probably owned land on the Dicker waste

where he made bricks. (Fig 4.) There were three brick-makers in Arlington in the second quarter of the seventeenth century and John Chapman, a brickmaker from Hellingly, had been married in Hailsham in 1657. (20) With the gradual leasing of parcels of the waste, this was an industry which was to grow and prosper in the area during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Stock-rearing was also the mainstay of the high-wealden farmers. In this heavily wooded area, developed as swine pasture by early pioneers from downland manors, the common field system was probably never operated. A custumal of the Manor of Laughton, which had woodland outliers in Waldron and Heathfield, shows that in 1292 the tenants in these areas paid rent in the form of hens and eggs. The raising of chicken and other fowls continued to provide an economic outlet in the wealden parishes of the Cuckmere for centuries. As in the low weald, arable farming was carried out for subsistence, but successful husbandry demanded a variety of skills, not only in the care of stock and the maintenance of cattle-proof hedges, but because the farmers also engaged in bi-employments connected mainly with cattle and timber. Tanning, glove-making, charcoal burning, shoemaking and saddlery, together with a certain amount of cloth-making were carried out. (21) Roger Elliard of Warbleton, described as a tailor, bequeathed wool, hemp and linen yarn, to his wife in 1603. These bequests were not surprising for a tailor, but he also willed to his wife two

PART OF BUDGET. MAP OF SOUTHWESTERN



kine, one weaner, one heifer, one bullock, pigs, geese, malt, oats, wheat and sufficient stock to suggest that farming constituted an important adjunct to his income. (22) The opportunity to engage in skilled trades, or craft work and farming drew surplus labour to the large high-wealden parishes, where there was also a hope of squatting on the remaining waste situated on the northern ridges. (23)

During the Tudor period the wealden regions witnessed a period of growth. Farmers extended their acreage by encroaching on and cultivating the waste; they limed and marled their difficult soil; and they experimented with new crops, especially hops. (24) The revolution in the iron industry and the growth of the market for Sussex cannon resulted in a prosperity that was unique. In Waldron, Heathfield, Warbleton and Chiddingly the ironworks provided winter employment for dozens of part-time workers, but it was a prosperity that was short lived. (25) The tenuous nature of the boom was exemplified by the career of Thomas Stollion, a yeoman of Heathfield and Warbleton, who, after managing ironworks for gentry owners, went into partnership with them. Later he purchased ironworks in Warbleton, where by 1598 he was also lord of the manor. He built a grand mansion at Iwood in Warbleton, in the heart of his empire. By 1616 he was bankrupt. (26) Although the Warbleton ironworks had ceased to operate by 1660, the industry continued in Waldron and, for a time, in Chiddingly. New ironworks were opened in Heathfield in 1693.

Medieval Landowners

Lewes Priory, Battle Abbey, Bayham Abbey, Robertsbridge Abbey, Michelham Priory and the Bishop of Chichester were all considerable Cuckmere landowners in the medieval period, and the power of the church was very much in evidence. One advantage of ecclesiastical ownership was that the great monastic estates were usually efficiently run, and although the soil in all areas of the Cuckmere was hard to cultivate, husbandry was at its peak. A case in point was the great manor of Alciston, which belonged to Battle Abbey and which spread into the parishes of Berwick, Alfriston, Arlington, Hellingly and Lullington.(27) The Augustinian Priory at Michelham included amongst its estates land in Hellingly, Chiddingly, Arlington, Waldron and Seaford.(28) At Heathfield lay the remaining waste of the Bishop of Chichester's manor of Bishopstone. This area developed considerably in the 13th century, when the bishop had about forty tenants there. Land bordering on the Cuckmere was newly leased as assart and in 1315 the bishop was granted a licence to hold a weekly market in Heathfield.(29) In 1415 the Augustinian Priory of Hastings - apparently about to fall into the sea - was granted land in and moved to Warbleton.(30) Ecclesiastical landholding in the valley grew when the rectories of Heathfield, Arlington and Sutton (Seaford) were gifted to various prebendaries of Chichester Cathedral.(31)

Reformation

The dissolution of the monasteries, which had provided

a tenurial link in the Cuckmere valley, passed with little commotion. The two Augustinian houses, Michelham and the New Friory at Warbleton, had both been indicted for corruption and mismanagement during the 15th century and although some improvement had taken place at Michelham, both houses were seriously under-manned in 1536.(32) In 1533 Thomas Hoth, the precentor at Warbleton, had been tried in the consistory court at Chichester, accused of heresy. He had stated that, 'it wer necessary and convenient that the New Testament wer in English that everyman might rede and understand it.' Hoth had also quoted the words of a Cambridge Reader in Divinity, who had suggested that every priest might lawfully have a wife. At his trial Hoth renounced his heresy, but his defection suggests that the desire for reformation was not unknown in the wealden parish of Warbleton.(33) Warbleton was a parish where the analysis of will preambles showed an early allegiance to protestant ideas - ideas that were to spread to other Cuckmere parishes. Warbleton also had connections with Cranbrook in Kent, where Protestantism had made an early impact.(34)

The wealden parishes of the Cuckmere produced a group of determined and independent people. This was particularly noticeable after the Reformation, when the spirit of religious reform flourished in the area. In 1556 Thomas Mills of Hellingly was burned at Lewes for his faith, and a year later Richard Woodman and George Stevens of

Warbleton, together with Margery and James Morris of Heathfield and several protestants from parishes outside the Cuckmere area met the same fate.(35) During the years following the burning of the Lewes martyrs the desire for reform appears, not surprisingly, to have been dormant, but preambles to wills show that even under the influence of a conservative rector, John Farmer, testators had not forgotten their protestant beliefs.(36) Soon after the election of Richard Curteys, a keen reformer, as Bishop of Chichester in 1570 a new rector, William Hopkinson, was appointed at Warbleton. Although Hopkinson was a pluralist and resident at Salehurst, he chose a zealous curate for Warbleton called Thomas Hely and both had trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities for not conforming to the prayer book.(37)

Hopkinson and Hely were not the only reforming clerics in the valley. In 1578 Stephen Turner, the minister at Arlington, was indicted at East Grinstead Assizes for not wearing a surplice when he administered the sacrament on Easter Day and, 'on many other occasions.'(38) At Hellingly in 1605 John Warren was deprived and replaced after the Hampton Court Conference.(39) John Miles the vicar of Heathfield, was a friend and supporter of Hely's, to whom he bequeathed his 'best gown and Rhems Testamento.'(40) Thomas Hely has become notorious for baptising his own and many other children from Warbleton and other parishes with names of 'godly signification'. The young of the neighbourhood laboured under such names as Sin-

Deny, Faint Not, Sorry-for-Sin, Be-Steadfast and even No-Merit. The trend towards reform, later known as puritanism, because its adherents wanted to purify the church, continued. In Warbleton a series of puritan-minded ministers followed Hely. (41)

Archbishop Laud had problems in Eastern Sussex and informed Charles I in 1634, 'My lord of Chichester certified all very well in his diocese, save only in the east part, which is far from him; he finds that some puritan justices of the peace have awed some of the clergy into like opinions with themselves, which yet of late have not broken into any public inconformity.' (42) Laud's reactionary arminianism was not well received in the Cuckmere Valley and his decrees, promulgated to restore dignity, uniformity and high church ideals, were not always carried out. Seaford churchwardens reported in 1637, 'these are to certifie that our communion table is neither raled nor turned with the end of it north and south, because it standeth where the chieftest seats of the parish are placed and there is no other convenient place to place it in...' Chiddingly wardens reported at Easter 1638, 'our communion table stands in the midst of the chancell and without rales,' while at Heathfield a presentment at Michaelmas in the same year stated, 'our chancell is not severed from the body of the church with a partition.' Warbleton churchwardens reported, with some sadness, 'The linnen cloth for the communion table, though it be cleane, yet not so good as

becometh that use,' and at Easter 1639 they complained, 'they weare theire hats in time of sermon especially many of the greatest men...' (43)

John Wilson, an arminian vicar of Arlington, met with strong resistance in his parish. In 1633, since earlier complaints had been ignored, he had presented his churchwardens, 'for that the font will not hold water, but wee are fayne to use a Bason (which at other tymes I doe washe my hands in) for that sacred use...' The rift between vicar and parishioners continued. By 1642 they were reluctant to attend his services and were able to defend their defection by quoting copiously from the scriptures. Wilson was later ejected by Parliament and accused, among other far worse crimes, of being a 'frequenter of ale houses and a great drinker' who 'hath in his sermons much commended Images in Churches ... and that men should pray with beedes.' (44) The Rev. John Nutt, a parson with royalist sympathies, retired from the neighbouring parish of Berwick, after having been sequestrated from Bexhill for pluralism and non-residence by the Committee of Plundered Ministers. He also lost St. John's in Lewes, as it was joined with St. Michael's. (45) Nutt's departure from Berwick may have been caused by local animosity, for he had been much concerned with his own rights and opposed to progress. To the suggestion that tithes might be commuted to a money payment, he wrote, 'anathema sit qui alienaverit.' (46)

The Re-allocation of Land

In the Cuckmere Valley a most important result of the dissolution of the monasteries was a change in landownership. The greatest beneficiaries of this change in the Cuckmere were three gentry families - the Gages, the Pelhams and the Sackvilles. Their supremacy in the valley provided a continuing cohesion which had formerly been provided by ecclesiastical landowners. All three families were elevated to the peerage after 1560 and the heads of each family, at different times, found success at court and were involved in national government. These families were to exercise a major influence on social conditions in the Cuckmere Valley between 1660-1780. They do not fit exactly into any of the concepts which have been expressed in the long-lasting debate about the crisis among the aristocracy from 1558 to 1641.(47) Stone postulated the idea, based on a Tawney theory, that the aristocracy declined in this period, giving way to a class of new gentry. Stone suggested this was due to over-expenditure by the old aristocracy. Trevor-Roper argued that there was a massive decline among small and middling landowners - 'mere gentry' - and that it was the yeomanry who flourished. The newly acquired power of the three families owning land in the Cuckmere, although it was based on landholdings, was not gained at the expense of the old aristocracy - much of their newly acquired land had been monastic property - and not one of the three families could be termed 'rising' gentry, since all three had been landowners in eastern Sussex for many

centuries.

One of the Gages had married a St. Clere heiress before 1446 and the family had had an interest in land at Exceat in West Dean from that time. They also owned land near the Cuckmere parishes, mainly at West Firle. After the dissolution the family acquired some profitable woodland called Abbots Wood in Arlington, together with other land in the valley, which had formed part of the manor of Alciston. Sir John Gage, K.G., who was born in 1449, was 'formed for the camp and the court'. A favourite of Henry VIII, he held various offices at court including those of Constable of the Tower, Comptroller of the Household and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. However, the Gages adhered to Catholicism. Sir John's son, Sir Edward, was Sheriff of Sussex during the reign of Mary Tudor, but by 1566 he was known to the Privy Council as a gentleman who possessed a private chapel and who chose his own priest 'from a distance'. His son was committed to the Fleet Prison in 1580 'for obstinacy in popery.' This religious defection delayed the elevation of the Gages. Although the seventh baronet Sir William Gage joined the established church in 1720, and became a Member of Parliament for Seaford in 1722, it was not until 1780 that William Gage - already an Irish peer - was granted an English barony. (48)

The Pelhams, who later moved to Laughton and then to Halland in East Hoathly, had held property in Warbleton in 1282 and had been taxed there in 1296. Sir John Pelham had been a supporter of Henry of Lancaster (later Henry IV) in

his successful rebellion against Richard II in 1399. He was rewarded by being created a Knight of the Bath and sword bearer to the king. The Manor of Laughton held by the Pelhams included land in Waldron and Chiddingly. They also had an estate, including a deer park in Hellingly. Since they had held three demesne manors of the Rape of Hastings (Crowhurst, Burwash and Bivelham) in 1465 and at various times afterwards, they also claimed jurisdiction over the waste of the Rape of Hastings, which included land in Warbleton and Heathfield. After 1561, when Queen Elizabeth I removed the manor of Bishopstone with its outlier at Heathfield, which became a separate manor, from the possession of the Bishop of Chichester (thus weakening the Bishop's power in Eastern Sussex), the Pelhams acquired Bishopstone and its manor house near Seaford became their favourite shooting lodge. In 1611 Thomas Pelham was one of the first men to purchase a baronetcy when this rank was created by James I. His son, who inherited in 1624, took a personal interest in his estates, which included a furnace in Waldron and forges at Bivelham and Brightling. He was an 'improving' agriculturalist and an enterprising livestock farmer. He also had a taste for London life and spent a considerable amount of money buying his way into the London world of fashion in the years between 1630-1650. Nevertheless, Sir Thomas was of a 'puritan turn of mind' and a supporter of the Parliamentarians during the civil war. (49)

The Sackvilles had been established at Buckhurst in

Withyham before 1189. Related to Queen Elizabeth I through the Boleyns, they shot to supremacy during her reign. Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst was High Treasurer of England by 1599. He remained a favourite at court after Queen Elizabeth's death and was created Earl of Dorset in 1604 by James I. Although Queen Elizabeth's gift of Knole at Sevenoaks in Kent meant that this mansion eventually became their chief residence, the Sackvilles remained part of East Sussex society for a time. Their holdings in Sussex increased and included land that had once been in ecclesiastical ownership, namely the Manor of Heathfield (newly separated from Bishopstone) and Michelham Priory. A map of the Cuckmere levels, drawn in 1618, shows that the Earl of Dorset was one of the largest landowners in the valley. At this time the Dorset landholdings, near the Cuckmere also included Chiddingly Park, Milton Street Farm in Arlington Parish, land in Berwick and Lullington Manor.(50) During the Civil War the Sackvilles were royalists and this, or the extravagance of the fourth Earl, seems to have resulted in their loss of the advowson of Berwick and also of the manor there.

The re-allocation of land after the dissolution did see the arrival of new men in the Cuckmere area, who founded gentry families. Often they were lawyers, who created large estates and settled down as landlords, though some were not to remain for long. There was Sir Thomas Jenner in Warbleton; Sir John Jeffray, Queen Elizabeth's advocate and Chief Baron of the exchequer, at Chiddingly, but the

most remarkable was William Thomas, who became clerk of the peace for the county, purchased the manor of West Dean and invested in a vast estate in that and neighbouring parishes.(51) Another family of newcomers to purchase land in the northern parishes of the Cuckmere were the Fullers, probably best known as ironmasters, but who were primarily landowners, holding farms in Waldron, Heathfield, Warbleton, Chiddingly, Hellingly and Berwick. These families did conform to Stone's concept of a 'new' gentry, although it was not until the eighteenth century that the Fullers became county magnates. Stone's latest work denying that elevation to landed society was open to new families, based on statistical evidence from Northamptonshire, Hertfordshire and Northumberland - all north of the Thames - is not corroborated by events in the Cuckmere Valley. It will be shown that the Fullers were not the only 'new' gentry family to appear.(52)

Influence on Social Conditions after 1660

There is a valid criticism that historians often research local history solely from the point of view of landowners. This study will be concerned with the social conditions of all people in the Cuckmere Valley, but at this period the life-style of the rural population was often dictated by their landlords. The landowners controlled tenants; they frequently provided work; their attitudes towards the less fortunate members of the community had a distinct bearing on the way in which the poor were treated;

social mobility often depended, not only on the aspirations of rising men, but also on the willingness of the governing class to accept social climbers. The Establishment of the Church of England, together with the national system whereby social services were organised through the parish, meant that the elite governed the masses through the church on a local basis.

The life-style of a family or group also depended on the prevailing ethics within the group and ethics were connected with religion. It was obligatory to display the Ten Commandments in every church and subscribers to the Church of England were versed, or expected to be versed in the catechism. Religion could also affect the economic viability of a group - particularly a dissenting group, since many of their numbers were heavily fined for their refusal to pay church tax or tithes. It has even been suggested - somewhat contraversially - that puritans were not as acquisitive financially as others or, at least, that they were less in sympathy with usury.(53) Religion affected neighbourhood relationships and seigneurial attitudes. Therefore, in an area like the Cuckmere Valley, where religion (either established or dissenting) flourished, it was the church, together with the landowners who influenced social conditions during the period 1660-1780.

Historians, both national and local, have been fired with enthusiasm for the period leading up to 1660 - the Civil War being of particular interest. After 1660

interest has waned and although, as suggested by Thirsk, the religious settlement at a local level was as important as the history of policy making at the centre,(54) generally it has been ignored by local historians, except for a detailed study of the clergy in Leicestershire.(55) Unfortunately, Fletcher's work on Sussex in the seventeenth century ends in 1660, and a recent volume of studies in Sussex Church History contains no article dealing with this important period. Fletcher's contribution in the latter is merely a re-iteration of his earlier theme and contains no post-1660 references.(56) The story of dissent in Sussex between 1603 and 1803 has been outlined by Caplan, but his manuscript deals with a wide canvas and does not explore the social effects of dissent on individual communities.(57) The way in which the events of the Restoration and the eighteenth century decline in the influence of the Church of England affected the daily lives of Sussex people has not been investigated.

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CHAPTER II

THE LANDOWNERS: FROM PIETY TO POLITICS

An Isolated Black-Spot

The Cuckmere Valley was isolated. Its northern parishes situated in the weald were difficult of access and dangerous to travellers; the smaller, southern parishes lay hidden between folds of the downs. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its roads were in a deplorable state and, like its bridges, were often the subject of presentments at hundred courts and quarter sessions.

Heathfield parish, for instance, was the object of continuous complaints. In October 1661 the inhabitants were held responsible for digging a stone quarry in the highway leading from Catt Street to Hoare Apple Downe. As this was also the main route from Lewes to Battle, the complaint is not surprising and repairs were effected by April the following year.(1) Less disrupting were the misdemeanours of John Cornford, who in 1682 dug a sawpit in the highway leading from Catt Street to Hellingly and of Widow Company who erected a hog pound on the highway from Heathfield furnace to Heathfield church in 1733.(2)

Hogpounds, sawpits and even quarries were a shorter-lived problem than the passage of guns,- a continuing headache for wealden ironmasters and their men. The cannon were usually shipped from Lewes or Newhaven. In January 1671 Robert Homan and Anthony Swane, both of Chiddingly, were presented at Quarter Sessions for carrying loads of guns which exceeded the legal weight. On this occasion the

complaint stated that the guns had been carried through Ringmer and South Malling, on the direct route to Lewes from the Cuckmere. No doubt, the Chiddingly roads also suffered because of the furnace at Stream in that parish. Some years earlier Homan and Nicholas Messuage, a forgerman of Chiddingly, together with Stephen French, who actually owned the furnace, had been indicted for not scouring their ditches, so contributing to the morass on the local roads. The carriage of guns from the Fuller furnace at Heathfield after 1692 and until 1763 was distinctly harmful to Cuckmere roads. John Fuller wrote in 1743, 'I have gotten twenty nine-pounders... to Lewes... these twenty have torn the roads so that nothing can follow them, and the Country curse us heartily.' (3)

Some important roads in the area were turnpiked in the middle of the eighteenth century, and this did improve conditions, but the road from Heathfield to Battle was not turnpiked until 1813. (4) As this was a river valley, the repair of bridges also caused considerable problems. In 1674 seven bridges in different Cuckmere parishes were out of repair. (5) Chilver Bridge in Arlington was in a dangerous condition in 1681 and 1713. (6) The bridge at Exceat, traversing the river near the estuary, between the parishes of Seaford and West Dean, which had been 'bilt with stone' in 1656 was already in need of repair by 1685, when the justices allowed for a tax of three hundred pounds to be raised for this purpose. By 1747 further repairs were required and, as it was a major bridge, the inhabitants of

the Rapes of Lewes, Pevensey and Hastings were held responsible. (7)

The valley was dangerous for travellers in other ways, since Cuckmere Haven was particularly suited for landing contraband and the seclusion of the valley lent itself to smuggling activities. In July 1720 a report concerning a group of smugglers at Cuckmere Fell stated that they were armed with pistols, cutlasses and clubs as they guarded twenty or thirty horses loaded with barrels of brandy. (8) This was not an isolated event. In the eighteenth century Sussex smugglers became so bold that they did not always confine their activities to the hours of darkness, and it was generally considered that the justices were afraid of them and often declined 'putting the laws in execution against them.' (9) The northern parishes were as vulnerable as those near the estuary. Winslow suggests that when Richard Haffenden of Heathfield was robbed in his own home by four men 'with crepes over their faces' armed with pistols and a blunderbuss, they were in fact smugglers collecting valuables in order to finance a smuggling venture. (10) John Fuller of Brightling, a local justice of the peace, wrote the Duke of Newcastle a gleeful letter in 1751, to inform him of the capture of a gang of highwaymen, one of whom had assaulted the occupant of one Heathfield home and stolen from the occupant of another. The robber, whose mother was a tenant of the Dukes, had stolen two mares from William Preston the vicar of Heathfield, between two

and three o'clock on Christmas morning. He had then broken into the house of John Stace 'cutting open four doors... and almost smothered him in his bed to make him confess where his money was.' (11)

Power and Prestige 1660- 1700

Possibly because of its isolation, the Cuckmere Valley was not an area where the aristocracy chose to live and it was devoid of the great country houses which were the centre of rural life, providing patronage and some prosperity to the surrounding villages and subjecting the local population to their influence. In 1660 the Gages were fettered by their adherence to Catholicism. The Sackvilles, at Knole, operated from a distance. It was the Pelhams who exerted the greatest influence in the valley. They owned two mansions near, but not in, the Cuckmere area - a grand Elizabethan house at Halland in East Hoathly, a parish which bordered on Waldron and Chiddingly; and a hunting lodge at Bishopstone near Seaford. (Fig 4.) In 1660 Sir John Pelham was a county magnate who influenced many of his peers and also the lesser gentry living near his estates. His behaviour at the Restoration provided an example for the Cuckmere neighbourhood, where the new laws seem to have made little impact among the gentry.

The Corporation Act of 1661 and the Act of Uniformity, passed in 1662, debarred from public office all who refused to swear allegiance to the Church of England and to take communion according to the new Book of Common Prayer. (12) Perhaps this had repercussions in Seaford, a parliamentary

borough, where life was enlivened by constant electioneering and where one of the members returned to Parliament in 1660 was George Parker of Ratton in Willingdon, who had been a moderate with vague Royalist leanings during the Civil War.(13) There was little evidence of change in the magistracy. Fletcher has shown that most magistrates in eastern Sussex in the period 1640-1660 had been puritans, leading lives of godliness and sobriety. There were, however, many degrees of puritanism and people of a puritan persuasion did not necessarily condone dissent, especially when it was apparently revolutionary.

There was a particularly fierce reaction against members of the Society of Friends who, in their early years, were aggressive and exhibitionist.(14) Their seditious behaviour generated fear among the gentry. The disturbances in the parish church at Alfriston in 1657 had earned the Quaker, John Willett, the punishment of being 'sett to hard labour' by the Lewes J.P.s.(15) Sir Thomas Jenner of Warbleton, whose daughter was married to Quaker Abraham Cruttenden, the tenant of one of the largest farms in the same parish, had committed Richard Luckins the gaoler of the county gaol at Horsham to the House of Correction in 1656, for showing undue kindness to Quakers who had been in his care.(16) By 1660 Sussex magistrates had already taken the line that in the interest of maintaining order, strict enforcement of the law came even before personal interest. There is no evidence to suggest that any Cuckmere gentry

joined the ranks of dissent in 1660, though in 1685, after the Monmouth rebellion, when the grand jury at Lewes Sessions drew up a list of 'malecontent dissenting and phanatical parties' and 'foul persons' reputed to have abetted the rebellion it included two gentlemen from Hellingly, Samuel Barton and George Luxford, a former sheriff of Sussex, who were leaders of the local Presbyterian gathering. (17)

In 1661 Sir John Pelham, knight of the shire, headed the East Sussex Commission of Peace. Although the Pelhams had supported the Parliamentary cause, they had not been political extremists. Sir Thomas Pelham of Halland, (Sir John's father), had viewed the civil war as a demonstration against the King, which he hoped would 'persuade him to govern with greater respect for the desires of men of property'. Neither he nor his son John had been in favour of regicide, and both had been excluded from parliament when the army took control at the end of 1648. Sir Thomas had died in 1654. Sir John was a supporter of the Restoration, who added his name to the address presented by the Sussex gentry to Charles II in 1660. After 1660 he continued to represent the county in Parliament. Married to Lucy Sidney, daughter of the Earl of Leicester, he lived on a grand scale in London and at his Halland mansion, which he completely re-furbished and which was still his main residence. In 1680, when his daughter Lucy married, he insisted that the ceremony should take place in Sussex, in spite of his wife's known preference for London. Perhaps

it was his puritan upbringing which caused him to veto London because it 'would be more expense (sic),' but his Sussex ties were also important to him for he 'applied himself to the further enhancement of his prestige and to an energetic role in county government.' (18) He became vice-admiral of Sussex, a gentleman of the Privy Chamber, a deputy-lieutenant and a leading magistrate. In 1688, when James II tried to replace him and other ex-puritan magistrates with Catholics, Quarter Sessions nearly collapsed and only four J.P.s turned up. In the 1690s, after the accession of William III and Mary, Sir John, the patriarch of the Restoration bench, was still heading the Commission of Peace at Lewes. (19)

By 1662 some important gentry families, who had lived in the Cuckmere in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, had abandoned the area. The Jeffrays no longer lived at Chiddingly Place; the Chownes were not resident at Alfriston, though they were to return before the end of the seventeenth century; Sir William Thomas, whose grandfather had founded the family estate in West Dean, Litlington, Arlington, Lullington and Seaford, had removed from West Dean to Folkington, which was outside the valley. (20) When he died in 1706, his estate passed to the Dobells of Street, who appear to have played little part in Cuckmere affairs. (21) There remained Sir Thomas Dyke of Horam in Waldron, who in 1660 was the only member of the Lewes bench who was actually resident in the Cuckmere Valley. (22) Dyke

was the son of a successful ironmaster, and had established himself as a leading county figure. He became 'a man who mattered in Restoration Sussex.' (23)

The authority of the justices of the peace was extensive. Primarily their brief was, as their title implies, to maintain the King's Peace, but this involved a myriad of responsibilities. They held Quarter and Petty Sessions, supervised the repair of roads and bridges - often with limited success. They were responsible for the militia, for gaols and houses of correction, for issuing licences and also for administering the Poor Law. They were unpaid local government officers and high grade social workers rolled into one. Local gentry aspired to the office of magistrate, sometimes from a genuine desire to fulfil the obligations of gentry status, but also because it was an acknowledgement of their place in society and extended their local influence. (24) Certainly it was easier for a gentleman to gain a seat in parliament, if he could demonstrate that his suitability as a landowner had already been supplemented by experience in county office. (25)

Upward Mobility in the Eighteenth Century

Sir John Pelham's son Thomas, who succeeded in 1702, was elevated to the peerage as Baron Pelham of Laughton in 1706. His advantageous match to Lady Grace Holles, daughter of the third Earl of Clare and sister of John Holles, Duke of Newcastle, further advanced the Pelham fortunes. (26) Although Lord Pelham held office at court

and was also a Vice-Admiral of Sussex, he emulated his father and remained faithful to the county of his birth. If the simple black marble slab, which covers his tomb in Laughton church, is a representation of his character he may have retained a vestige of the puritan streak possessed by his grandfather; though possibly the parsimonious Pelham streak, displayed by his father in denying Lucy a London wedding, had been passed on to his heirs. Lord Pelham and his wife had two sons, Thomas born in 1693 and Henry, born in 1695, both of whom figured as national leaders and held great offices of state for most of their adult lives, and for much of this time used the Sussex mansions merely as convenient electioneering headquarters.

Thomas Pelham succeeded to the Holles estates in 1711 and the following year, on the death of his father, he became the second Baron Pelham. As a supporter of the Hanoverian succession and an opponent of James Edward Stuart's 1715 rebellion, he was doubly rewarded, becoming the recipient of the titles formerly held by the Holles family. He was created Earl of Clare in 1714 and Duke of Newcastle the following year.(27) The Pelhams had advanced to the aristocracy and Thomas Pelham Holles lived 'on a truly grand and ducal scale.'(28) As his voluminous correspondence shows, he was indefatigable, particularly when pursuing his parliamentary interests. His alliances with the Sackvilles, and to some extent with the Gages, gave him a political hold in Sussex. This was especially strong

in the Cuckmere Valley, for these great landowners could deny leases to tenants who would not vote for the candidate they favoured. Newcastle's jurisdiction also spread to the clergy - the instruments through whom he influenced lesser men in their parishes. Because the parish, through the vestry, was responsible for the poor, the Duke of Newcastle's control and influence over the Cuckmere Valley covered all classes of people.

In particular, the Duke had the power to control his tenants - in Lewes those who did not vote for his candidates were deprived of their tenancies.(29) This may well have happened in other areas. It will be seen that clergy and tenants who did support him were rewarded with lavish parties at Halland and elsewhere. In the parliamentary borough of Seaford the entire population (including the poor) benefited from electioneering charity. In 1733 William Hay, a new candidate for the borough, wrote to the Duke, 'it will be necessary to do something more than barely to give them your Grace's annual entertainment... it will be proper (as your Grace intimates) to give a dinner to the Gentlemen, a double fee to the Ringers and a double portion of Beer to the populace'. Although Hay declined to ask all the voters to dinner as 'their wives and families and all the Rabble would come with them', he thought it proper to assure the common voters of half a guinea, believing this money would be 'well bestowed'.(30) Throughout the eighteenth century this type of hospitality continued to be available in Seaford, a borough where the

vote was held by all those who paid scot and lot. (31)

The elevation of the Pelhams left a gap in East Sussex society. Although they continued to maintain their influence in the area, socially they had risen far beyond the reach of most Sussex gentry with whom they had formerly shared office as magistrates, and administratively they had moved from the local to the national sphere. (32) In part, the gap was soon filled by the Fullers of Tanners Manor in Waldron, whose origins as tradesmen in Uckfield were soon obliterated as they acquired larger and larger estates. They became a new gentry family, who were remarkable because they first achieved a status as landowners and then acquired an interest in the iron industry, an interest which they pursued with great zeal, although this was not a normal activity for a gentry family. Their increasing estates, included land in Heathfield, Hellingly, Warbleton, Chiddingly and Berwick, as well as land outside the Cuckmere area. (33) In 1615 Samuel Fuller had married Joane French, daughter of Stephen French, the owner of Stream Furnace in Chiddingly. (34) In 1650 John Fuller, son of Samuel and grandson of Stephen French had obtained a lease of Stream and had entered into partnership with Sir Thomas Dyke. (35) The friendship of these two families continued and was to provide a threat to the political activities of the Pelhams in the eighteenth century. In 1693 John Fuller (a Major in the trained bands) leased Heathfield ironworks, which he and his son operated and later purchased. Young John

Fuller seems to have been in charge from 1703, shortly before he moved to Brightling, a short distance from the northern Cuckmere parishes. Following the lead of aristocratic families, he made a profitable marriage with a West-Indian heiress, which gave him and his descendants an interest in sugar plantations in Jamaica, which further augmented the family income. Although he did not add greatly to his landholdings, his sons did. He continued to work Heathfield furnace with considerable success.(36) From 1716 Waldron furnace, formerly operated by the Pelhams, was also his possession.

In 1713 John Fuller (now the first John Fuller of Brightling) was elected as a member for Sussex in a hard fought contest.(37) It was a desperate Tory flourish in a rear-guard action, in which they postulated their long-held belief that the Church was in danger from dissent. Dissenters, having gained the right to hold their own meetings as part of the Revolution Settlement, were a constant irritation to the high-church Tory party. A particular source of grievance were those non-conformists, who by occasionally taking the sacrament according to the Anglican rite, were able to hold minor public office, although their normal practice was to worship in their own meeting houses. Since these houses were now recognised, those who attended them had become more visible, although they probably conformed no less than the majority of established churchgoers.(38) This attitude of the Tories represented a manifestation of the Church's failure to come

to terms with dissent. In any event the Tory success in 1713 was short lived, for with the accession of George I the Whigs were restored to power. They remained in control for many years and during those years the authority of the Church declined on a national and local level

Political Alliances of the Gentry

Although the lesser gentry normally opposed the Whigs and supported 'Church and King', in the Cuckmere Valley the benefits of Newcastle's patronage and hospitality could not be ignored. He controlled many parliamentary boroughs and any Sussex gentleman who coveted a seat on the bench, or even in parliament, might do well if allied to his interest. After 1761, when he became the Lord Lieutenant of the county, Newcastle officially acquired the power of choosing justices of the peace. Even before that date it is most probable that his wishes in regard to appointments to the bench were not ignored. His patronage could also secure lucrative posts for the sons of lesser gentry, who in the early years of the eighteenth century were often financially embarrassed by the burden of land tax.

Although the Dykes and Fullers were no longer partners in the iron trade, the two families remained allies. When John Fuller I stood against Newcastle's candidates at the 1734 election, he was supported by Sir Thomas Dyke. In the eighteenth century, they and their adherents were among the few gentry in the Cuckmere Valley who opposed the Duke of Newcastle politically.(39) Among their supporters were the

Offleys of Possingworth in Waldron and the Roberts and the Lades of Warbleton, who were all kinsmen of the Fullers and the ties of kinship among gentry families were very strong.(40) In spite of the efforts of Richard Burnett, Newcastle's agent, they would promise only one vote to the Pelham candidate, the other being reserved for John Fuller. Walter Roberts of the Stone House in Warbleton explained that he had such obligations for particular services done by Mr. Fuller that he must give him a vote, though he promised not to be active for him.(41)

Roberts was in a difficult position. His response to Burnett gives the impression that he would have liked to vote for the Duke's candidate, although the lesser gentry normally favoured the Tories and supported 'Church and King.' Roberts may have been influenced by the Tory leanings of Thomas Barton, the Rector of Warbleton, who was opposed to the Whigs. However, there was another local personality, who may have had some influence. Sir John Lade, the lessee of Warbleton manor between 1708 and 1740, had been brought up by his maternal aunt, Anna Roberts.(42) He had purchased a country seat at Cralle in Warbleton, where he is reputed to have entertained George II. Lade was also related to the Fullers, who managed his Sussex estates. He had made a fortune as a Southwark brewer and had been Member of Parliament for that borough from 1713-1722 and 1722-1727 and in politics was regarded as a Whig who would sometimes vote for the Tories.(43) Lade's ambivalent attitude may have been due to a dislike of Tory

policy towards the non-conformists, for the inscription on his memorial in Warbleton church proclaims that he was 'without acrimony to dissenters.'

John Fuller I of Brightling abandoned his parliamentary aspirations after 1734 and devoted himself to his industrial and agricultural interests. The Fullers were also 'improving' farmers, who displayed much acumen in maximising the use of their farms and woodland.(44) John Fuller II of Brightling, who inherited in 1745, also sought a seat in parliament, but decided that it would be wise not to oppose Newcastle. He abandoned the Tory interest and was found a seat at Boroughbridge by the Duke.(45) John Fuller II had social aspirations, enlarged his Brightling mansion and added a deer park.(46) His younger brother Rose, who inherited in 1755, was a faithful supporter of Newcastle.(47) Both he and his youngest brother Stephen were appointed to the bench and as deputy lieutenants.(48) Rose Fuller's correspondence reveals his interest in local government, and county affairs.(49) In the middle of the eighteenth century Sir Thomas Dyke, having made a profitable marriage with a Kentish heiress, also moved away from Waldron and took up residence at Lullingstone in Kent. So a substantial lobby against the Pelhams disappeared from the northern Cuckmere parishes and their influence in the valley was supreme until Newcastle's death in 1768.

The Iron Industry in a Non-Industrialised Society

For most people living in England the period 1660-1780

comes under a blanket heading of 'pre-industrial society'. Yet in the Sussex Weald the iron industry was in active operation and in the Cuckmere Valley four parishes were involved. The wealden iron industry provided employment opportunities, not just for skilled workers, but also for woodmen, charcoal burners and carters, masons, tanners and carpenters. (50) For the most part, because of a shortage of water, the industry was only operational in the winter. Many skilled workers at the Fullers ironworks were also their tenants, who rented and ran small farms - Thomas Cavey the head founder, was the tenant of Nettlesworth Farm in Heathfield, which comprised 93 acres. Less skilled men were usually employed on the Fuller estates in the summer. The Fuller works operated from 1693 until the end of the period, though with greatly decreased output after 1763, when government gun contracts ceased. The decline of the Wealden iron industry may have been partially due to increased specialisation and the shifting of industrial outlets towards the Midlands and the North. (51)

Some references are made to the operation of the industry in parish records. At Waldron in June 1660 a 'servant to Sir Thomas Dike was drowned in the furnace pond and buried...' and in May 1695 William Jarrot of Buxted, 'founder to Major Fuller' was also buried in Waldron. (52) Heathfield parish register has references in 1741 and in 1743 to the burial of 'a traveller from the Furnace.' (53) Sackville records show that in September 1750 John Gaine, a furnaceman, was admitted to 'a little cottage with half an

acre of land at Hail Hill' in Heathfield. (54) These references supplement the Pelham and Fuller furnace records, by providing added information about local people employed permanently or part-time at the ironworks, but the employees themselves do not appear to have been conscious that their occupations separated them from their neighbours in any way. Men known to have been employed by the Pelhams at Waldron, make no reference to the iron industry in their wills. (55) There was no perception that peripheral employment in this industry altered the normal rural life-style - presumably because it did not. This was not an industrialised society in the modern sense of the word. The great landowners still controlled and substantially influenced the lives and life-style of ordinary people.

CHAPTER II - THE LANDOWNERS - REFERENCES

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- 39) The 1734 election campaign is discussed below in Chapter V.
- 40) K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680*, (1984) 48.
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- 47) E. Doff, 'Poor Old Rose', *SFH Vol.3 No.5*, (Brighton 1978) 130.
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- 52) ESRO PAR 499/1/1/2 & 3.
- 53) P. Lucas, *Heathfield Memorials*, (1910) 89. Lucas has added, 'Traveller must be taken in its old sense of "travaillier" a labourer.' Since a vagrant, at this period, was often called 'a traveller', it is possible

that these entries may refer to itinerant paupers who had tried to find employment at the Furnace.

54) ESRO ADA 144.

55) ESRO W A.50/19 Sampson Dearing, yeoman (will proved 1718) had been frequently employed at various tasks at Waldron Furnace. He bequeathed twenty-five shillings to his 'loving friend' Thomas Moore of Waldron, whom he appointed as overseer of his will. Thomas Moore was clerk of Waldron Furnace from the 1690s until 1715. (B.L. Add Mss 33154 & 33156). In his will (ESRO W A.50/217, proved 1720) he is described as 'yeoman'. He owned three small farms in Waldron and another of 28 acres in Heathfield. Both Dearing and Moore bequeathed gold pieces to grandchildren or godsons. This suggests that their employment at the furnace had allowed them to amass some savings.

CHAPTER III

THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

'A Liberty to Tender Consciences'

Before Charles II returned from Breda, he issued a Declaration which showed that he was aware of the problems of achieving a religious settlement, owing to the 'several opinions in religion', which were causing animosity and party conflict in England, Scotland and Ireland. Anxious to please, he promised, 'a Liberty to Tender Consciences.' (1) His own religious beliefs were ambivalent and although he appears to have been prepared to exercise tolerance, this may have been because he was not sufficiently interested in religion, at this time, to risk unpopularity for its sake. (2) The promise made at Breda proved to be a hollow one. Neither the King, nor the Presbyterians who had instigated the Restoration, had envisaged the extent of public reaction against extreme puritanism.

As Professor Hill has shown, it is extremely difficult to define what is meant by 'Puritan', for the word came to have different meanings at different periods. Originally it was a nickname attached to protestant divines influenced by the reforms observed at Calvin's Geneva church, who were 'dedicated to the task of purifying the work and worship of the Church of England.' In the first half of the seventeenth century it described all those, including laymen, who still wanted church reform. (3) Allied with

these desires was a commitment to a one-to-one relationship with God and a strong personal desire to live a life of godliness and piety. During the Civil War, Cromwell had recognised that religious zeal furthered the crusading spirit in his New Model Army. In the interest of victory he had permitted great flexibility in the religious attitudes of his men.(4) These attitudes became more and more radical and eventually resulted in the revolutionary demands of sects such as the Levellers, the Ranters and the Quakers.(5) Fear of sectarianism tempered the attitude of less zealous puritans and had a reactionary effect on the national leaders. Charles II, who was determined never to go on his travels again, assented to the severe statutes which constituted the Clarendon Code. The dominance of the Anglican Church was legally ensured, while political power was confined to members of the Church of England, not just on a national scale, but also on a local level - until the Toleration Act of 1689 allowed 'occasional' conformists an entree to local government. The Survival of Puritanism

With the Restoration Settlement, Anglicanism became the national religion and was supported by gentry families in Eastern Sussex, many of whom, including the Pelhams, had been committed puritans.(6) They conformed because 'much Puritan or at least strongly Protestant thought and practice survived.'(7) Magnate support for Anglicanism was mirrored by many lesser gentry and aspiring yeomen, eager for social advancement; often the clergy followed where their patrons or the local magnates led. Parsons with puritan leanings and

many of their flock may have been satisfied that the 1662 Book of Common Prayer contained sufficient puritan elements to salve their consciences. It has been said that attitudes labelled as 'puritan' belonged to the seventeenth century as a whole and 'many people who were not puritans were "of a strict and holy conversation" and tried to live a godly and sober life.' (8)

One of the tenets of puritanism which had been assimilated by the Anglican Church was the doctrine of justification by faith. The will of Richard Weller, Rector of Warbleton, who was instituted during the Commonwealth and remained as rector until his death in 1683, demonstrated his belief in this doctrine and his reliance for salvation on Christ's passion. He trusted 'in the mercy of God through the merits of Jesus Christ my blessed saviour that after death shall put an end to mortality, I shall live with him in glory.' (9) Weller's belief in his predestined place in heaven shows him to have been more puritanically persuaded than Augustin Metcalfe, parson of Berwick who, in his will dated 1671 expressed a desire for 'mercy for all my sins... through the alone merits and intercession of ... Jesus Christ my saviour and redeemer.' (10) Faced with the possibility of death, almost all Cuckmere testators during the 1660s commended their souls to God and many expressed gratitude for His bounty during their lives - a distinct falling-off in hope compared with the aspirations expressed in Protestant and Reformist wills made between 1530-

1559.(11) This may have been due partly to the tempering of puritan thought, partly to caution on the part of testators, and partly to revulsion caused by the behaviour of extremist puritans during the interregnum.

It has been argued that 'it was the Church of William Laud that was to be re-established.'(12) Certainly, the religious policy adopted by the Cavalier Parliament was reactionary and those who thought that Bishops, if they survived at all, would have a more pastoral role than formerly were to be disappointed. But the restored church appears to have been much closer to the Elizabethan ideal than the Laudian. The removal of the altar table to the chancel was not one of the requisites of the re-established church. 'In the 1662 Prayer Book the rubrics relating to the chancel and communion table remain unaltered ... from what they were in 1559.'(13) A canon of 1604 had further elucidated the rubric of the 1559 Prayer Book - 'the communion table may still be set up in the part of the church which is most convenient.' In 1674, a catechism which was, admittedly, published with the intention of seeking converts from Presbyterianism, had an illustration of the Lord's Supper showing the altar placed east to west, with the communicants kneeling round it and the minister and his assistant standing one on the north side and one on the south.(14) The Church of England had moved irrevocably towards puritanism during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and although the composition of the church became narrower in 1660, in that all who held extreme

views were excluded, the basis of the established religion was the Book of Common Prayer revised in 1662, in which the most important change from that issued in 1559 was the use of the Authorised Version for the Epistles and Gospels.

Re-Instatement of the Clergy

Reactionary administrative changes took place when the King, thwarted by both Puritans and Anglicans, had abandoned his attempt to achieve a moderate religious settlement. The hierarchy of the established church was to be similar to that of the Laudian period. Bishops were re-instated, with reduced powers; cathedral chapters were restored and archdeacons re-appointed. Henry King, who had been Bishop of Chichester in 1642 and who had been captured by parliamentarians in 1643, returned from his retirement at Langley in Buckinghamshire and was restored to his see. He was one of the few bishops who survived from the period before the Commonwealth. He was a poet of sensitivity, and possibly it was his artistic talents that led him to devote much of his declining energy, until he died in 1669, to restoring the Cathedral and Palace at Chichester.(15) His poems show that he had been involved in a remarkable struggle to reconcile himself with mortality and had little faith in his own elevation to eventual glory.(16) He cannot have been in sympathy with puritan beliefs and must have viewed those who held them with disfavour.

In October 1662 Bishop King visited Lewes and, 'there himselfe at St. Michael's preached in person.'(17) The

following day a confirmation service was held and a sermon given at the Cliffe in Lewes. This sermon, however, was not preached by the Bishop. The next triennial visitation was not held until 1666. The Bishop did not appear in person, and in 1668 when Archdeacon Hardy visited Lewes, 'in his owne person and dining all the ministers at the Starre gratis,' his presence was, to judge by Giles Moore's method of recording it, an unusual occurrence and, since the Archdeacon was also Dean of Rochester, unlikely to be repeated in the future.(18)

In September 1660 the Act for Confirming and Restoreing of Ministers re-instated most of the surviving, sequestered ministers to their former livings and, with some exceptions, confirmed the titles of incumbents instituted by the Commissioners for the Approbation of Public Preachers.(19) Among the sequestered ministers living in the Cuckmere Valley was William Rogers of Chiddingly. He had previously been the Rector of Chailey and had been sequestered from that living before 1650. By October 1652 he had moved to Chiddingly where he recorded in the parish register, 'Robert Baker, Vicar of Chiddingly was buried by me Will Rogers.'(20) The ability of an ejected minister to find another parish during the Commonwealth, was probably due to a national shortage and Pruett has recorded that in Leicestershire about a third of the clergy evicted from their livings either returned to them or found new ones in the 1650s.(21) Rogers remained at Chiddingly as minister until 1661, when he returned to Chailey, the minister there

having been ejected as an intruder. While he had been at Chiddingly Rogers had obviously been something of a reprobate. He was almost certainly the minister who, from January to December 1654, during the period of the parliamentary ban on church weddings, married forty-four couples in Chiddingly church. He was bound over at the midsummer sessions in 1655, to answer for his behaviour.(22) Such a step in the puritan-minded Cuckmere area appears unusual, but Fletcher has shown that opposition to secular marriage was very powerful.(23) Even to-day, there is a strong feeling that vows taken at a religious wedding ceremony are more binding than those made before a secular authority and many people who do not normally attend church insist on being married in one. This same feeling would have been stronger at a period when formal religion was part of everyday life. In fact, Cromwell's daughter was married in the chapel of Hampton Court, according to the old service.(24) It is possible that in spite of Rogers' record, the local inhabitants in Chiddingly were more law-abiding than the Protector, for it is also recorded in the Chiddingly registers that many of the couples married by Rogers had travelled long distances to do so, some coming from Kent and Surrey. In fact, very few local couples took advantage of this illicit service.(25)

Seven Cuckmere ministers, admitted during the interregnum, John Citizen of Arlington, George Hall of Berwick, William Wilkin of Heathfield, John Saxby of

Seaford, Ezekiel Charke of Waldron, Richard Weller of Warbleton and Tobias Gyles of West Dean were all confirmed in their livings in 1660. (26) John Saxby moved to the neighbouring Rectory of Blatchington in 1661 and John Citizen, who may never have visited Arlington during his three years incumbency, since the registers were not kept or signed, was appointed to Streat in 1662. (27)

Two ministers from the area were ejected between 1660 and 1662, for they refused to declare their 'unfeigned assent to all and everything prescribed in or by the Book of Common Prayer.' (28) Considering the expressed distaste for pluralism shown by the Committee for Appointing Public Preachers, it is surprising to discover that both these men had been pluralists - but it stresses the shortage of ministers during the interregnum and helps to explain the appearance of a man like Rogers. Calamy mentions both the ejected ministers, John Stone of Hellingly and Thomas Malthus. John Stone had also been Rector of Litlington and was ejected from that parish as well. Calamy cited Malthus simply as being parson of Alciston, but he was also vicar of Alfriston and was taxed there in 1662. (29) Although he was appointed to Alfriston by Charles II in 1660, on the death of the former incumbent, he refused to take the oath. His absence from Alfriston was noted in the register of the neighbouring parish of Berwick, where children from Alfriston were being baptized during 1661 and 1662, 'the minister of their parish being then absent.' (30) The ejection of these two ministers was probably received with

mixed feelings locally. Malthus may never have been recognised by his Alfriston flock, while Stone's disappearance from Litlington, (a much neglected downland parish) might have caused little comment. At Hellingly things were evidently different, for Stone continued to reside in the parish, in spite of the Five Mile Act, and was buried there in October 1688. In 1672, after Charles II's ill-fated Declaration of Indulgence, an application was made for John Stone, a presbyterian, to preach at the house of Nicholas Winton in Waldron.(31) Stone obviously continued to minister to some of the dissenters in the northern Cuckmere.

It may seem surprising that there were not more departures in the wealden parishes. It must have been particularly difficult for Richard Weller, the Rector of Warbleton, to accept the Act of Uniformity but Warbleton was a very lucrative living and, faced with ejection and loss of livelihood - Weller had three children and a wife of gentle origins to support - a *volte face*, real or apparent, could have been a sensible policy.(32) Although he had been appointed to Warbleton during the interregnum, Weller was actually presented to the living by Charles II and his presentation was confirmed by Bishop's Certificate on 23rd July 1661.(33) But this was before the fateful St. Bartholomew's Day 1662. The diary of the Rev. Ralph Josselin of Earl's Colne in Essex revealed that it was possible for a non-conforming parson to retain his parish

and avoid reading the Act of Uniformity. (34) The eastern Weald was far from Chichester and supervision was lax. Stone of Hellingly was not the only local parson to ignore the Five Mile Act. Joseph Bennett of Brightling, although ejected, continued to live in that parish and, when plague scared away the new incumbent, ministered to his ex-parishioners. (35) Pruett, too, has shown that, given the support of the local gentry, a covert puritan minister could remain undetected. (36) At this time, the residence of gentry families in Warbleton was extremely fluid. Sir Thomas Jenner, who had shown his dislike of quakerism, had already departed. Since there were several manors in the parish, there was no strong manorial control. Weller may well have relied on indifference as well as support. The lack of documentation concerning the reading of the Act of Uniformity by those who continued in office must raise questions about the extent of their conformity.

The Non-Jurors

In the reign of James II the clergy were again forced to re-assess their positions in the light of James' avowed Catholicism. There were no resignations. Allegiance to the Stuarts was evident and the aftermath of the 'Glorious' Revolution produced three non-jurors in 1689. Having taken the oath of allegiance to James, who was still alive, they felt that they could not perjure themselves by taking the oath to William and Mary. So Robert Nowell of Seaford, Thomas Brett of West Dean and Thomas Eades of Chiddingly were all deprived of their livings. (37) In the case of the

latter, there is some reason to suppose that his objection was based more on a dislike of a foreign king, than upon loyalty to a previous one. Thomas Eades expressed his feelings in his epitaph. He described himself as:-

A faithful shepherd that did not pow'rs fear;
But kept old truth and would not let her go
Nor turn out of the way for friend or foe
He was suspended in the Dutchman's days
Because he would not walk in their strange ways.

Robert Nowell's defection may have been due to loyalty to his patron, rather than his ex-king. For he was a protegee' of William Snatt, Prebendary of Sutton at Chichester, who had resigned from the living of Seaford in 1682. Snatt, the only Vicar of Seaford to find a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, was a 'devout and consistent high churchman,' who 'resigned all his preferments rather than take the oath to William and Mary.' (38) One Cuckmere parson, Richard Russell, Vicar of Alfriston 1709-1714, carried his loyalty to the Stuarts into the next century. He resigned in 1714, refusing to take the oath to George I.

No further soul-searching decisions of this kind were required during the eighteenth century, but politics remained an important factor in the lives of most Cuckmere parsons; for the church became the tool of politicians and country clergy often owed their living to the whim of a wealthy patron. In this respect, the Cuckmere area was particularly vulnerable. For nearly sixty years, from 1712-1768, Thomas Pelham-Holles was the head of the Pelham family. In common with most politicians of the period, he

looked upon the established church as a safeguard for the Whig system of government.(39) It will be shown that most Cuckmere parsons were cajoled or bribed into supporting Newcastle's parliamentary interest - a decisive change in the politics of the lesser clergy. It is not surprising that John Fuller, the wealthy landowner and ironmaster at Heathfield, who was a Tory M.P., for Sussex in the final parliament of Queen Anne's reign, noted a change in the voting habits of the local clergy when he stood again in 1734. He told the Duke's agent that he 'wondered at it that there should be such an alteration amongst the clergy that when he stood last he had all of them and now but very few.'(40)

Supervision by the Higher Clergy

Although frequent references were made in churchwardens' accounts for the various Cuckmere parishes to Archdeacons' visitations during the years 1660-1780, the Archdeacons travelled only to important centres like Lewes or sometimes to Hastings. Then, as now, it was the churchwardens who did the visiting - to be sworn in at the commencement of their year of office and to make their presentments. Although the parish clergy were also expected to attend archidiaconal visitations, the records of attendance are sparse. Those which do exist for the years 1724-1732 reveal that there were many Cuckmere clergy who were absent, or represented by a curate. The year 1728 seems to have been particularly bad. The entries read:-

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Minister</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Berwick	John Hawes	Excused
Seaford	Thomas Knight	Absent
Waldron	Richard Lidgould	Absent
West Dean	William Edwards	Absent
Heathfield	Edward Luxford	Curate
Warbleton	Roger Callow	Absent

There do not appear to be any entries for the other six Cuckmere parishes for this year.(41) Possibly there was nothing to enter. Although episcopal visitations must have been made during the period and, indeed, Bishop Ralph Brideoak (1675-78) died suddenly while on a visitation (though he may not have reached the eastern part of the diocese), there is no evidence in parochial or diocesan records to suggest that any of the higher clergy visited the Cuckmere parishes during the period 1660-1780 and it is possible that confirmations were carried out at Lewes. The two well-recorded 'Visitations' of 1686 and 1724 took the form of detailed questionnaires completed by local ministers.(42) Visitation papers between 1755 and 1780 contain no reference to Cuckmere parishes. Chichester Diocese, whose boundaries were co-terminous with those of the ancient county, was notoriously difficult to administer; the easternmost regions, over 70 miles from Chichester, could not be reached without negotiating the dangerous Wealden roads; and the Bishop's jurisdiction was limited in the east because a large area (mainly in Pevensey Rape, where ten of the twelve Cuckmere parishes also lay) was included in the Archbishop of Canterbury's exempt Deanery of South Malling; in Hastings Rape the Peculiar of the Dean of

Battle was also beyond the jurisdiction of the Bishop.(43)
The bleakness of the records can be understood, but faced with the impotence and indifference of ecclesiastical dignitaries, even the faithful must have been disheartened. It is not surprising that a rift grew between the higher and lower clergy in this classic period of Anglican decline.(44)
The Decline of Ecclesiastical Courts

Ecclesiastical courts had already been in decline before they were abolished during the Commonwealth.(45)
When they re-opened in 1660, they began to function slowly. Two Cuckmere wills were proved by the end of 1660 and another two in 1661. This relatively small number suggests that it took some time to restore the complete working of diocesan authority. Later records confirm that the courts never attained their earlier importance and that it was mainly for probate purposes that they had any value at all. Even so, the length of time taken to resolve cases shows a similarity to those tried in civil courts, (where prolongation was to the obvious advantage of lawyers). Witnesses or defendants summoned to attend often resisted the summons for months and, when they did appear, had frequently to return home with the case still unresolved. In November 1759 the will of Richard Walls of Seaford was contested by two of his creditors. After the case had been referred to the next session of the court on eight occasions, it was finally dismissed in September 1760.(46)

In the early years after the Restoration, churchwardens' presentments and bills of detection show that

the archidiaconal court at Lewes was much concerned with the upkeep of the fabric of churches. These records continue until 1730, and although many of the churches fell into decay between that time and the end of the century, there are no existing records to illustrate the onset or progress of that decline - a decline which seems to have been matched by the inefficiency of the courts.(47) The ecclesiastical authorities were also concerned with public morals and many of the cases tried in ecclesiastical courts related to adultery, fornication and bastardy. Again, the number of cases tried decreased in the eighteenth century, and this cannot have been due to a sudden increase in morality. Cases involving public morality were considered outside the jurisdiction of the justices of the peace, sitting at Quarter Sessions, though the justices' involvement with Settlement Orders often made them directly responsible for placing any bastard children who had become a charge on their parish, and their more efficient work in this sphere must have devalued the church courts. It must be stated that eighteenth-century Quarter Sessions Indictments, especially after 1730, show a similar falling off in the number of cases brought to court.(48)

In another sphere, too, for at least twenty years from 1663 to 1685, the justices had duplicated the work of the ecclesiastical courts. Quarter Sessions Indictments for these years show that in the Cuckmere parishes over thirty people were presented to the justices for non-attendance at

church, or for holding illegal religious meetings. (49) The same groups of people were being presented to the ecclesiastical courts for the same reasons, and the church authorities excommunicated hardened offenders. The majority of these people were either Quakers or Baptists, for dissenters flourished in the area. To a convinced dissenter, excommunication meant nothing and the dissenters continued to flourish, providing a living example of the impotence of the church courts. The general amnesty made by James II brought an end to indictments for non-attendance at church, and after 1689 the church courts could no longer excommunicate chronic offenders for this crime. A Norfolk parson complained in 1692, 'The Act of Toleration hath almost undone us ... in a short time it will turn half the nation into downe right atheism ... no churchwarden or constable will present any for not goeing to church, though they (go) noe where else but to the alehouse.' (50)

It was not just the Toleration Act which caused a lack of interest in religion. In areas such as the Weald, it was possible to escape indoctrination of any sort. Quoting from the diary of Viscount Percival, Malcolmson relates the story of some colliers, living in the west of England in 1733, who thought the Commandments were a local family. (51). People in remote areas could avoid attending their parish church. Churchwardens' presentments reveal non-attendance at church by inhabitants of the Cuckmere parishes, who cannot be counted among the members of dissenting sects. In the large, high-wealden parishes many may have been

deterred from attendance because they lived a considerable distance from their parish church, and in all areas bad weather would have imposed restrictions by reducing the roads to a quagmire. It is also possible that there were people who stayed away from church, not because they held conflicting religious views to those expressed by the established church, but because they held no views at all.

In 1664 Clarendon and Archbishop Sheldon transferred responsibility for the taxation of the clergy to parliament, so divesting Convocation of its final *raison d'être*. (52) On the rare occasions when the assembly did meet after that time, no business of importance was conducted. In 1717 George I pro-rogued Convocation, which did not meet again until 1852. (53) The lack of a national assembly for the clergy, and the knowledge of growing impotence caused by governmental legislation may have aggravated lethargy and indifference among the Sussex higher clergy and contributed to the gradual failure of the ecclesiastical courts. The rift which grew between the higher and the lower clergy in the eighteenth century has also been attributed to the prorogation of Convocation, for it had served as a meeting place where the higher and lower clergy could meet to 'discuss the doctrinal and practical questions affecting them all.' (54) The years of the Civil War and the Interregnum had proved traumatic for the Church of England. Since its foundation by Henry VIII, the Church had changed direction many times, but during these years its hierarchy

and structure, as well as its doctrines, had been challenged. Its stance after 1660 was wholly reactionary. It sought to eliminate all deviant forms of religious thought and expression and, by doing so, it failed to establish itself as a truly national church. It dissipated its energy in persecution and failed to provide a unifying strength among its clergy. Successive governments helped to complete its emasculation.

It has been stated that the mood of the country in 1660 was violently Anglican.(55) This statement is not entirely true of the Cuckmere Valley. Although some people, especially the gentry, were happy to see the church re-established, there were some who were indifferent and others who were not pleased by the process. There was also a large group which was steadfastly opposed to it, for there were several groups of dissenters who flourished in the area, particularly in Warbleton, Hellingly and Alfriston; all three were parishes containing several manors.

Spufford has indicated that there was a distinct correlation between dissent and lack of manorial control.(56) However, most people followed the lead of the county magnates and were willing, in the interests of unity and law and order to accept the dominance of the established church, shorn of its Laudian high church principles. There was a general desire to counteract the new subversive elements, which had emerged during the interregnum. Anglicanism was restored and was responsible for influencing the lives of many ordinary people. Local parsons were influenced by their patrons, or

by magnates, particularly the Pelhams, who could offer them preferment. The ideals of the local incumbent rubbed off on his parishioners, for Elizabethan jurisdiction had ordained, and later events had confirmed, that life on a local level should be governed within each parish by the vestry, whose chairman was normally the parson. The parson was, therefore, likely to be a key figure in village life.

CHAPTER III - THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
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CHAPTER IV

THE FABRIC OF THE CHURCH

Reversing a Trend

It has been argued that churchwardens' accounts show that Sussex churches were kept in good repair during the years immediately preceeding 1660.(1) Nevertheless, the necessity for reversing a trend and re-introducing articles for clerical use which had been forbidden during the Commonwealth, and the re-furbishing of village churches was a fairly costly business for some Cuckmere parishes in the period immediately after the Restoration. The presbyterian Directory, for instance, had to be replaced. Even those churchwardens who had been sufficiently farsighted, or niggardly, to preserve the old Common Prayer Book would have been thwarted by the introduction of a new one in 1662. Apart from their responsibility for the upkeep of the fabric of the church, the wardens were also required to provide and maintain a variety of artifacts, vestments, vessels and linen, together with items of furniture which displayed church law or preserved parish documents. These included a fair linen cloth for the communion table, a pulpit cloth or carpet, a surplice (an article not in use during the Commonwealth) a stout chest with three locks for storing parish documents, a poor box, a book of homilies and a Bible, a book containing the thirty-nine articles of religion, the communion vessels and a bowl in which they could be washed. The Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer had also to be displayed.

At Chiddingly in 1662 the churchwardens paid seven shillings for a common prayer book, half a crown for a book of articles of religion and £2 10s 6d for a silver bowl. They also paid £3 10s 0d to John Swaine, the local mercer, for a new surplice made of holland - though in their accounts John Lewes and Robert Homan slyly indicated that Swaine had made a nice profit. These items, the bowl, the prayer book, book of articles and the surplice represented over 50% of their annual total expenditure of £12 3s 7d. In the following year the expenditure was only two guineas, which included three shilling for re-glazing the church windows and two shillings for washing the 'communion cloats and surplus'. (2) In 1673 one shilling and fourpence was paid for a book of canons. Entertaining at the visitation of the Bishop's ordinary, another expenditure which would not have been required during the inter-regnum, cost the churchwardens a considerable amount. Four shillings was spent on dinners in April (presumably when the new churchwardens visited the Archdeacon's court to be sworn in) and a further four shillings and eightpence was expended in July of the same year, 'at the Bishop's visitation,' by the Chiddingly churchwardens. Other parishes had also replaced broken or unused items in the early 1660s. At Warbleton it was recorded in the register, 'October 10th 1663 Memorandum that out of the old chalice being broken and valued at £1 7s 0d and the oblations given at the communion was made the new chalice which with cover cost £3 16s 0d

done by Mr. Thomas Seymour goldsmith at the *Princes Armes* in Lombard Street'. (3) This seems to have been extremely good value compared with the cost of the new surplice at Chiddingly. It is not surprising that the churchwardens there had hinted that John Swaine had overcharged them.

Churchwardens' Presentments and Bills of Detection

Churchwardens were required to present, twice a year, anything that was amiss or irregular in the parish. (4) Their Presentments for the Cuckmere parishes have not survived in their entirety, but they can, in some cases, be supplemented by Bills of Detection. After 1730 there are no records relating to the fabric of the churches in the Cuckmere Valley, and it is not possible to ascertain whether this is because they were not made, whether they were deliberately destroyed, as being of little value, or whether they were simply mislaid. (5) In any event, who, what, and how much was presented depended to a large extent on the prejudices and energy of individual churchwardens and the authority exercised over them by the local incumbent and the Archdeacon of Lewes. Where dissenters existed in a parish, they would appear to have represented the greatest threat to order and unity, so that any deficiencies in the fabric of the church or church furniture may have taken second place, or even have been totally ignored. According to the Compton Census of 1676, there were dissenters in every parish in the Cuckmere Valley. (6) Judging by the entries made in those churchwardens' presentments which are extant, it appears that in the wealden parishes, the defection of

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dissenters was of primary importance. Therefore, deficiencies in the fabric of the church and in the supply of prescribed articles of worship and apparel may have been overlooked in those parishes.(7)

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One of the greatest problems which faced churchwardens, with regard to their responsibility for church furniture and articles of clerical apparel was that these were subject to wear and tear. By 1680 the Common Prayer Book, presumably purchased in 1662 by the Alfriston churchwardens, needed a new binding, as did the church Bible. There were several missing items, including a surplice, communion cup or flagon and a cloth to lay on the communion table. Four years later the Prayer Book and Bible may have been repaired, but the missing articles had not been replaced and others, namely a pulpit cloth and cushion, had disappeared or had been worn out.(8) On some occasions, the agents of dilapidation were human. At Michaelmas 1682 John Tattersall, the rector, of Waldron complained that William Gillett and Henry Kenward had 'violently and after a rude manner and at an unreasonable time' broken into the church and had jangled and rung the churchbells, without his permission or that of the churchwardens and that they had broken down the chancel door and two side posts, leaving the church insecure. This was rectified fairly speedily, for repairs were completed by October the following year.(9)

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Surplices provided a recurrent problem. In 1675 and 1676 the churchwardens of four parishes, all in the lower

part of the Cuckmere valley, Alfriston, Arlington, Litlington and West Dean reported that they had none, though it is impossible to tell whether these items had never been replaced after 1660, or whether they had recently been lost or worn out.(10) In 1684 and 1683 surplices were required at Alfriston and Litlington respectively, and in the latter a later generation of wardens were still fretting over the same problem. In 1727 the surplice was not fit for use, 'but a new one will in a short time be provided.'(11)

Laundering this garment presented a permanent challenge and the cost varied from parish to parish. The Chiddingly wardens paid two shillings in 1663 for 'washing the communion cloats and surplus.' In 1716 laundering the surplice alone cost five shillings at Heathfield, while at Hellingly half-a-crown was expended in 1726 for washing the recently mended garment.(12) At Berwick it is possible to trace a rise in price over the years. In 1682 only half-a-crown was expended for washing the surplice on two occasions, while in 1731 five shillings was charged 'for washing the surplus at Christmas and Easter'. By 1757 the annual payment for this service in Hellingly was ten shillings and the price remained steady, for the same sum was paid to the parish clerk, Henry Blunden, in 1780.(13)

Missing items were frequently reported by the churchwardens. In 1679 some bell ropes were 'wanting' at Seaford and in 1686 a paten and poor box were also missing.(14) Between 1674 and 1677 Alfriston and West Dean lacked 'a carpet for the communion table'. Since it was

ordained that nothing was to cover the communion table except 'a fair linen cloth' the carpet was, presumably, placed not on but before, or at the side of the table, for the minister to stand on. Alfriston also lacked a communion cup and flagon 'and all other decency that belongs to the communion table'.(15) None of the missing items in this parish had been replaced by 1680, when a surplice was added to the list.(16) Litlington had no pulpit cloth or bible between 1674 and 1677. In 1684 a pulpit cushion was added to the list of requirements.(17) Missing items were occasionally mentioned in the Wealden parishes. At Warbleton in 1687 two important items of furniture were missing and the wardens promised, 'The Lords Prayer and Cread shall speedily be sett up'. At Hellingly, in 1726, the churchwardens were ordered to supply a paten, a book of homilies, a printed table of prohibited degrees of marriage and an account book.(18)

The record of neglect does not end with missing items. Churches were in constant need of repair. At Litlington there is a strong suggestion that the churchwardens lacked clerical supervision, or that they were at odds with the minister - for in 1675 they complained, 'our minister does not catechize the youth'. Between 1674 and 1677 the churchwardens reported that the steeple was out of repair, the bell was broken, and the parsonage house was dilapidated. In 1675 the church porch was also in need of attention. In 1682 it was still considered that the church

wanted 'adorning.' By 1683 the paving, the roof and the seats needed attention. Three years later the glass windows were the subject of complaint by the authorities. A marginal note in the episcopal records certifies that the windows were duly glazed, the church whitewashed and the bells repaired.(19)

Churchwardens in other parishes made placatory promises. At Heathfield they stated in 1675, 'as for the repair of our church and churchyard, we are now a-doing'. At West Dean work evidently took longer than anticipated. The hope, expressed in 1675 that repairs to the church and chancel would be finished by the spring, was extended in 1676 to, 'wee are repairing the church and shall put it in good condition by Michaelmas next.'(20) In 1679 the outside of the church had not yet been mended and the inside was still out of repair 'in the seats and other places' and several utensils were missing.(21)

Problems with Bells and Steeples

The provision and maintenance of church bells was a persistent problem in some parishes. At Arlington in 1677 the situation was desperate. 'The great bell is broake the other two ready for two drop in soe much that the clarke may be indamaged by ringing, if the other two be not speedily better hung.' Although the great bell had not been mended by Michaelmas 1681, all were reported as being well repaired by Michaelmas in the following year and - as an added bonus - the church was also 'well beautified'.(22) Special attention seems to have been paid to the state of church

bells during the 1680's, for there was a spate of presentments and bills of detection in connection with them. At Litlington (already in severe trouble for other deficiencies) 'the bells were reported 'out of repaire' from Michaelmas 1682 until Michaelmas 1686. (23)

In other parishes it took several years for satisfactory repairs to be carried out. At Berwick one bell was reported as being cracked at Easter 1679. Exactly two years later the churchwardens, summoned to the episcopal court, stated that one bell was broken and the rest required re-hanging. The wardens were warned to repair the bells and to certify that this had been carried out by November of the same year. Evidently some action had already been taken by Michaelmas, when it was reported 'the bells before presented to be out of repair and now repayring'. At Easter the following year (1682) the wardens promised that the one bell that was cracked would be 'speedily mended', but at Michaelmas one bell was still broken. It may have been mended, although five years later, in 1687, William Levett and William Carpenter were ordered to have one bell re-cast, and at Easter 1688 one bell was still out of repair. (24)

In the neighbouring parish of Alfriston a similar delay occurred. The bells were reported out of order at Michaelmas 1680 and were still defective in 1685. Ten years later new ropes were needed as well. (25) In 1690 a violent storm had taken place causing 'some of the healing

of the church (to be) blown off and the windows blown down with the wind'. By 28th November it was certified that the healing of the church and the windows were in very good repair.(26) The bells had also been re-cast by John Wood, a bell founder of some repute, who established a furnace and cast bells for Alfriston and Berwick. The Berwick bell was later sold to Alfriston. The charge for re-casting and providing new sockets cost the wardens of that parish £5 10s Od. They also had to provide the fuel for the furnace. Some assistance (both monetary and active) had been received from Parson John Hawes of Berwick, who recorded in the register, 'with much persuasion and contributeing ten shillings myself towards it, I got the little bell re-cast at Alfriston'.(27) The following year the wardens of Alfriston were granted permission to sell the surplus bell metal - 'provided the money arising by sale thereof be employed in beautifying and adorning said church.' They had supported their claim to do this by alleging that the inhabitants of Alfriston had been 'at a great charge...in new casting and hanging three of their bells' and 'in buying bell mettall to perfect the same'.(28)

At Heathfield the bells required new wheels and re-hanging in 1682. By 1684 one of them was cracked and the church also required re-roofing. In 1695 the steeple was out of repair. It is not possible to tell whether this work was carried out immediately, but it seems doubtful. If it was, the job was probably a makeshift affair, for by Easter 1708 the churchwardens Thomas Durrant and Richard Haffenden

were threatened with excommunication because the bells were defective. They compromised by using the metal from 'one great crack'd bell' and having it made into three smaller bells. They had to ensure that two new-cast bells were hung up in the steeple. (29)

All the necessary work may not have been attended to by the required date, for a single preserved sheet of Churchwardens' Accounts shows that major repairs to the steeple were carried out in 1716, when it was re-shingled. In 1716 at least £7 0s 8d was expended by the churchwarden John Cayley, in a single year, for repairs to the steeple, including an amount of two shillings for beer, 'for rearing of the church ladders'. Evidently the erection of scaffolding to enable the shinglers to work on the steeple was a thirsty business. Cayley's total expenditure for the year amounted to £10 13s 11d. (30) At Easter 1718 Chiddingly steeple was reported as being out of repair. As this steeple was one of the few stone spires which existed in Eastern Sussex - and the only one in the Cuckmere Valley - it is unfortunate that no records survive which detail the cost of repairs. (31) In the years between 1660 and 1730 churchwardens were continually harassed by their obligations to keep the churches and their furniture and fittings in good repair. Although most records fail during the years after 1730, the Hellingly churchwardens' accounts show that in 1751 a new treble bell was hung and £40 17s 6d was expended on 'metal and re-casting', while the belfry was

given a new floor and new doors.(32) It is evident that procrastination was a constant shield and that the enthusiasm of the authorities in carrying out supervision fluctuated. It must be supposed - in the light of the Hellingly records - that the battle between dilapidation and inadequacy, both financial and human, continued in other parishes too.

The Visitation of 1686

Diocesan records include two surveys which show, in some detail, the state of Sussex churches during the period. The first of these was made in 1686 when, a year after the transfer of Bishop John Lake to Chichester, a commission was established to enquire into the state of repair of churches and parsonage houses.(33) The 1686 returns show that the Bishop of Chichester had no cause for complacency about the fabric of ecclesiastical buildings in this remote corner of his diocese. If churches had been kept in good repair during the commonwealth, their deterioration in the twelve parishes bordering the Cuckmere during twenty-five years had been fairly consistent. Only West Dean reported 'Omnia Bene'. This happy state of affairs was probably due to the protracted repairs carried out between 1674-79 and to some last minute purchases, for the church lacked a communion table and cloth and pulpit cloth at Easter 1685. In 1687, a year after the visitation, the wardens at West Dean were still complacent and reported, 'The chancel in good repair and furnished with its proper utensells. The churchyard well fenced and the parishioners conformable.'(34)

A striking contrast to West Dean was Lullington, where it was reported in 1686, 'the church and steeple are down, the chancel windows not glazed and all things wanting except a bible and a register book'. Even the register was to disappear later, for the only one now extant commences in 1721. Speculation about the partial destruction of this tiny downland church is widely ranged. The building was enlarged in 1350 - after the black death had seriously reduced the population. (35) Local gossip favours destruction by 'Cromwell's men' or arson by a love-lorn incumbent. (36) The 1788 drawing of the ivy-covered chancel from the Burrell collection in the British Library is proof that the church continued to be neglected throughout the eighteenth century.

The returns for Litlington reflect the evidence of presentments and bills of detection. Missing items specified were a carpet for the altar, books of homilies and canons, the thirty-nine articles, a table of degrees, a poor box and 'a book to set down the names of them that preach'. Although the church and chancel walls needed whitening and the windows required glazing, the repairs to the steeple and parsonage house appear to have been carried out, as no mention is made of them.

On the other side of the lower valley, Alfriston church was most in need of repair. At Berwick the church fabric was not mentioned and at Seaford the roof, windows and floor were all reported as being 'a little out of repair'. At

Alfriston much work was required. The windows and floor of both church and chancel needed repair and whitewashing was necessary throughout. On the exterior two buttresses were 'somewhat decayed' and timber was falling off the north side of the church. As for furnishings - there was no carpet for the communion table, no communion cloth, no poor box, no parish chest, no book of articles or canons, no book of homilies and no table of degrees. Alfriston was a very large church and one which required the support of the wealthier section of parishioners, but the village - owing to its declined market status - was not prosperous at this time. Although it supported a large variety of trades, several of the tradesmen were dissenters. Some of the more affluent parishioners lived in outlying areas, such as John Brooke of Winton Street and the Chowne family of Frog Firle and may not have concerned themselves too closely with the dilapidation in their parish church.(37) However, the steeple, mentioned as being out of repair in 1675 and 1676 appears to have been mended and a silver bowl and cover costing £4 10s 0d., had been recently acquired.(38) In the year following the 1686 visitation the churchwardens at Alfriston, Thomas Rothwell and Francis Barnes, were ordered to repair one of the buttresses and the timber on the eaves; to mend the windows and paving and to whitewash the church. They were also required 'to have one bell that is cracked new cast and to gett a clapper for another bell; to buy a carpet and cloath for the communion table; cloath and cushion for the pulpitt; a poore boxe; a chest with three

lockes; a booke of homilyes; canons; articles and table of decrees prohibiting marriage; to have the register books kept according to the canon and to repair the churchyard fence' (39) The fulfilment of all these demands may have taken some time. It has already been noted that the repairs to the bells were not completed until 1698, although their deficiencies were mentioned in bills of detection in 1688, 1689, and 1695. (40) By 1693 a silver paten cover inscribed with initials of the churchwardens James Brooke and Robert Levett had been acquired and Thomas Chowne, aged fifteen, had presented the church with 'a most noble and worthy present, being a very decent and costly pulpit cloath and cushion' (41)

In spite of earlier repairs at Chiddingly, the report to the 1686 commission was gloomy. Chancel windows needed re-glazing and the nave required whitewashing. There was no carpet for the communion table, no silver paten, no table of degrees and strangely, as one had been purchased in 1673, no book of canons. However, it was noted that 'the churchwarden hath engaged to have what is wanting provided and what is decayed repaired.' Marginalia suggests that he kept his promise.

At Arlington walls, roofs and windows were in need of repair and several items of furniture were missing. Although this commission was engaged to report on the repair of parsonage houses, no mention was made of the parsonage house at Arlington, which had certainly been in existence

in 1629.(42) In the neighbouring low-wealden parish of Hellingly, the wooden steeple- stairs were 'very defective' and the pavement 'faulty'. However, materials to mend both had already been provided. In common with many other churches the walls needed whitewashing and the commandments and 'sentences of scripture' were to be 'new sett up'. In 1679 the church had been reported 'very much out of repair'. Particular mention was made of the fact that the pavement was broken up and that the church needed whitewashing - presumably, little or no work had been done in the intervening years. In 1680 Hellingly had been in trouble because the churchwardens had not be sworn in - a sign of lack of supervision.(43) Missing items included books of homilies, canons, articles of religion, table of degrees and carpet for the communion table. The Bible, which had required re-binding in 1679, appears to have been mended.

Two of the High-Wealden churches appear to have been in reasonable condition. At Warbleton all was in good order except the seats. At Heathfield the church was also in good order. Some items of furniture were missing and two bells were cracked - in 1684 only one had been reported as cracked.(44) At Waldron there was evidence of considerable neglect. The porch was in need of repair, since both walls were down and the timber rotten. The paving of the church had been defective for more than a year, the walls required a coat of whitewash, the roof of the steeple needed re-covering and the lead which lined the space between the two roofs of the main body of the church was defective 'to the

great injury of the church if not speedily mended.' By Michaelmas 1688 repairs had been acknowledged. (45)

The difficulty in attempting to analyse the 1686 visitation lies in the fact that in many parishes little is reported. It would be helpful to know whether silence should be equated with perfection or with indifference. Perfection seems to be the least likely. The findings of the commission and the resultant work carried out in subsequent years, in several parishes, suggest that supervision at the highest level was essential, if churches were to be kept in a reasonable state of repair. The normal process of presentation was not adequate for the task. It is, therefore, surprising that the next episcopal Church Inspection did not take place for nearly forty years, although four new bishops were appointed between the deposition of Bishop Lake (who refused to take the oath to William III in 1789) and the elevation of Thomas Bowers in 1722. The failure to do so suggests continued indifference by the higher clergy.

Bishop Bowers' Visitation 1724

Bishop Bowers' visitation, was rather more searching than that held in 1686, in that it demanded the answers to thirteen questions concerning the clergy, churches, parishioners and parsonage houses. (46) (Fig. 5) The returns were made by commissioners appointed by the bishop and these seem to have varied in number from parish to parish, for in some cases two men signed the submissions and in others

there was only one signatory. In the case of Warbleton four names were appended. Although several of the commissioners were local clergy, none was responsible for the returns from his own parish, except in the case of Heathfield, where the vicar George Jordan (related to Bishop Bowers by marriage) was already a Canon of Chichester and later to become Chancellor. He was, in fact, non-resident in Heathfield, since he was also Vicar of Burwash, where he had recently built a new vicarage. The returns mention that Nicholas Charrington was the curate in charge of Heathfield parish. (47)

On the whole, the Cuckmere churches seem to have been in a satisfactory state of repair in 1724. (Fig 6) West Dean, Warbleton, Berwick, Chiddingly and Lullington (chancel only) were reported in good repair; Hellingly, Waldron and Litlington were in tolerable repair and Alfriston and Arlington were well healed. The nave at Seaford had some dangerous cracks on the outside walls and the inside needed 'beautifying'. Seaford was the most neglected of the Cuckmere churches at this period. It had no chancel and its furniture was often lacking. Its assets were five newly-cast bells, one chest with two locks, a silver cup with a cover, a napkin and a good pulpit cloth and cushion.

The returns list the condition of the chancel separately from that of the main body of the church. Upkeep of the chancel, according to early custom, was the responsibility of the rector. (48) In cases where the rectory had been impropriated, to a layman it was often

difficult to get the impropriator to carry out the necessary repairs. Unfortunately, absentee churchmen were frequently at fault too. Three vicarages in the valley (including Seaford) belonged to Prebendaries of Chichester, of these three only Heathfield was reported in good repair. Arlington was singularly unfortunate, as it had two chancels (or a chancel and a north chapel) both of which required attention. At Arlington, Chiddingly, Heathfield and Hellingly the parsonage lands were leased to laymen, who probably had no personal interest in the upkeep of the chancel and who attended to defects only when ordered to. Repairs required at Chiddingly were soon carried out, as the note 'Done' was appended to the entry. The remaining five churches in the valley, Berwick, Litlington, Waldron, Warbleton and West Dean were rectories and in each case the chancel was reported as being in good or tolerable repair.

In spite of precautions to ensure that honest and unbiased returns were made, several of the questions relating to church furniture were unanswered. (Fig 6) Alfriston, for instance, was apparently the only Cuckmere church which possessed a cloth for the reading desk. Seaford and Arlington had none, but in the nine other parishes no information was given. Again, it must be presumed, in the absence of a positive answer, that there was a deficiency. On the plus side, every church had a Bible and Common Prayer Book, although those at Seaford were reported as being 'imperfect' and 'bad' respectively.

Since the communion service was not celebrated at Lullington, this church had no plate or furnishing for the communion table. In the remaining parishes, only Berwick lacked a cup or chalice. Five parishes, Arlington, Heathfield, Hellingly, Litlington and Seaford lacked a plate or paten; and Chiddingly, Litlington, Seaford and West Dean had no flagon. Arlington, Berwick and Heathfield all possessed a linen cloth for the communion table, Alfriston had two good cloths and West Dean one cloth - in both parishes the material was not stipulated - other parishes appear to have had none, although Chiddingly claimed a good carpet.

The impression gained from the returns made to the commissioners is that churches were in marginally better condition than they had been in 1686, but that chancels were often neglected. Information concerning furniture, as it had been at the time of the earlier visitation, was chequered. The lack of a communion cup at Berwick suggests that communicants would have had difficulty in partaking of the wine and lack of a plate or paten in four parishes would have entailed similar difficulties with regard to bread - but since Holy Communion was administered only four or, in some parishes, three times yearly, these omissions may have seemed of little importance to the commissioners. Yet there is a hint that they were easily satisfied and that a coat of whitewash was, literally, their panacea for many structural defects. Parts of the questionnaire were often ignored. The four commissioners who were responsible for

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assessing Warbleton, for instance, were clearly impressed by the 'handsome' communion cup, but appear to have forgotten to enquire about the linen; there is nothing to indicate whether Chiddingly possessed a Bible or Common Prayer Book, or whether the parishioners at Berwick had anywhere to sit. The visitations of 1686 and 1724 both showed the need for constant vigilance and supervision, if standards were to be maintained, yet from the available evidence it appears that no further visitations were carried out until the nineteenth century.

)
Pews

) Churchwardens were empowered to raise a church rate in order to obtain the money for repairs, and another of their duties was to present (which they frequently did) parishioners who had not paid their church tax. There were other ways in which they could obtain funds. One of these was by charging rent for pews. The building of pews in churches, an innovation after the reformation, due to the new insistence on the importance of the sermon, was not regularised, with the result that in some churches a very strange variety of seating existed.(49) Writing in the early twentieth century, the Rev. Edward Ellman recalled that at Berwick in 1837 the high pews had been added to and heightened, till few people could see over the top.(50)

) Although only Warbleton church had seats which were not in good order in 1686, by 1724 the pews in several churches including Alfriston, Arlington, Hellingly, Litlington and

Warbleton (where little improvement seems to have taken place in forty years) needed boarding at the bottom. At Alfriston and Heathfield it is evident that the seats lacked uniformity - those at Alfriston being pronounced as 'irregular' - and at Chiddingly some were old, some newly repaired and others new-built. The seats at Alfriston had been the cause of complaint by ministers and churchwardens for some time. In the year following Bishop Bowers' visitation it was admitted 'very little has been done towards it'. In 1727 some seats were still out of repair. (51)

There seems to have been some doubt about the legality of charging for pews and technically it was necessary to obtain a faculty from the bishop in order to build one. Unfortunately no Cuckmere parish possessed a Richard Gough or records such as those of Sedlescombe in 1632 and information about pew owners is scanty. (52) In 1683 a faculty was granted to John Hamblyn, gentleman, recognising his right to claim a certain pew in Warbleton church. The application was really made on behalf of Hamblyn's tenant Josias Linke, also described as a gentleman, and confirmed that this seat had for time out of mind been enjoyed by the tenant of the farm now occupied by Linke. It is not known why the application was made - probably two families claimed the same seat. No doubt Linke, the son of a linen weaver, was conscious of his new-found social status and wished to lay claim to a private pew. (53) In July 1686 Thomas Fuller of Roplehurst in Hellingly had his claim to 'the third seat

from the chancel doore on the north side of the middle passage from the chancel doore to the Belfry' confirmed in the ecclesiastical court.(54) The need for his application and the specific designation of the seat derived from a faculty granted the previous year to Fuller and Edmund Calverley, who apparently shared a pew. At Easter 1686 Thomas Lulham (who may have been Fuller's tenant) had been presented by the churchwardens, 'for making a disturbance in time of Divine Service by coming into a Seate in the ... parish church belonging to Mr. Edmund Calverly and sitting there without leave or permission'.(55) Property rights and prestige seem to have been the issue in this local quarrel.

It was the gentry, or aspiring newcomers to that class, who made a fuss about seating arrangements. At Chiddingly in 1723 Henry Miller, gentleman, and Edward Millward, gentleman, applied for a faculty to confirm pews near the belfry.(56) In 1722 another faculty was granted in Warbleton church. This time it was to Walter Roberts, gentleman, of the Stonehouse in Rushlake Green, whose family had formerly owned both Priory Farm and the Stonehouse. The separation of the two properties was basically the cause of the faculty and the result was a very grand galleried seat above the south aisle. Again, prestige was undoubtedly involved and Roberts wished to stress his importance as a leading landowner in the parish in view of the fact that his kinsman, John Lade, Esq., 'being lord of

the manor of Warbleton and possessor of a very considerable estate within the parish', and occupier of a seat in the north chancel as owner of Cralle, to whom the chancel belonged, had in 1719 acquired a faculty for a private vault under the belfry'. (57)

The gentry in Warbleton and Hellingly were especially anxious to ensure the legality of their rights to a pew. In other parishes things seem often to have been organised on a more casual basis. The Alfriston vestry minutes contain a memorandum signed by John Wade, churchwarden, on June 9th 1728, which stated, 'whereas Mr. William Woodham of Lullington hath built a new seat in the chancel of Alfriston at his own proper charge for the use of him and his family ... it is intirely his own for ever so farr as it is or may be in my power to grant'. (58) As Lullington church had fallen into partial decay and divine service was held there only once a month, it seems reasonable that Mr. Woodhams should have required a pew at Alfriston - a short walk over the river by footbridge from Lullington. However, only the Bishop had the power to grant a licence for a pew and as there had been no application for a faculty, Woodham's legal claim was tenuous.

At Arlington in 1712 another problem had been solved on a local basis. An agreement was made between Mr. Reed and Thomas Jenner to exchange seats with one Thomas Crundery, so that Jenner could enlarge the seat belonging to Mr. Reed by adding it to another, 'known by the name of churching seat, which being laid together are to belong to a house called

Cliftons at the Dicker'. (59) The Dicker was mainly unenclosed common, where the Felhams allocated plots of land to encroaching tenants. This new arrangement demonstrates the difficulties faced by churchwardens in parishes with a growing population when seats were regarded as private property. There is some evidence, however, from the end of the period that rights over seats were beginning to be viewed with distaste. At Seaford in 1772 permission to appropriate a seat in the church was refused to William Farncombe, gentleman, by the Bishop, for the minister and churchwardens opposed the application. (60) In Seaford, though, there may also have been some political motivation behind the objection.

Fencing the Churchyard

To-day most of the Cuckmere churches are surrounded by sandstone or flint walls. This type of boundary may also have existed in earlier times and fallen into disuse in the 17th century. At Berwick the churchyard had been walled with flint but, according to John Hawes, rector from 1695-1743, 'after the restoration it was set up with posts and rail', which suggests that during the Commonwealth the existing wall had fallen down. (61) There was still a stone wall at Alfriston in 1724 and it was very much in need of repair. It was probably this fact which caused it to be the only churchyard wall in the valley mentioned in the returns to Bishop Bowers' visitation.

Between 1674 and 1677 churchwardens in several parishes

had been worried about churchyard fences. At Warbleton it was stated, 'the churchyard doth want something;' at Hellingly the warden reported 'some small matter of inclosure to the churchyard which will be done in a short time.' (62) By the end of the 17th century fencing was apparently the norm in wealden parishes, where post and rail fences were kept in repair by occupiers of the land, whose portions were allocated in direct proportion to the amount of land held. For instance, Sam Rickman of Park Farm (one of the larger farms in Hellingly) was responsible for 26 feet of fence in 1753, while William Acton at Starnash (a smaller farm on the Dicker) was allocated only 12 feet. (63) At Chiddingly the rails were marked with the initials of those responsible for their upkeep. Both here and elsewhere they were called 'church marks'. The victorian local historian, Mark Antony Lower, professed that 'this primitive custom... is peculiar to this part of the country.' (64) Problems were encountered when landowners lived outside the parish and when tenants changed frequently. Thus in Waldron in 1675 John and Abraham Edwards of Mayfield, who owned Browne and Brockers farm, were presented for neglecting the repair of the churchyard gate and eight feet of fence. At the same time Markwick Haffenden, a considerable landowner, who lived at what is now called Stillyans Farm on the boundary of Heathfield and Waldron, was also presented for not repairing his portion of the fence in the latter parish. (65) Problems with changing owners continued to occur. In 1712 Hellingly churchwardens

defended their continued failure to expedite the repair of the fence, which had been a problem for three years, by maintaining that they did not know 'to whom they properly belong'. During the same period a similar excuse was offered at Waldron.(66)

An account of the church marks at Chiddingly was transcribed by John Herring the vicar in 1772.(67) This is symptomatic of a shift in parochial interests. The vicar was keenly interested in maintaining records which stated the responsibility of individual parishioners for the upkeep of the churchyard fence. He may also have been anxious to check whether he was responsible for repairing any part of the fence himself, for incumbents were not exempt. In the neighbouring parish of Berwick, the Rev. John Hawes had had a dispute with a parishioner, which had been referred to the ecclesiastical court in 1698. John Walker of Berwick had been accused by the rector of failing to repair the churchyard gates. Thomas Blackman, a seventy-eight year old carpenter, was a witness for Walker and stated that he had been present at the original allocation of the church marks during the incumbency of George Hall, who had died in 1669, and that the repair of the gates was the responsibility of the rector. Blackman himself had made the gates at that time and had been paid by Mr. Hall. He added that Walker was responsible for twenty-four feet of the fence and that that section was in good repair. Mr. Hawes was condemned and fined twenty shillings.(68)

A strong churchyard fence was essential, not only to keep out straying stock, but also to keep in any sheep that might have been used as lawnmowers. At Hellingly a tethered goat was used for this purpose, for in 1726 one shilling and sixpence was expended by the churchwardens for a goat poast for the churchyard and seting up'. (70) Since there was an abundance of wood in the weald it is possible that wooden fencing continued to be erected there during the eighteenth century and that the stone walls did not make their appearance in the weald until the nineteenth century. At Warbleton the churchyard wall was built in 1833. (71) In Downland parishes, where there was a shortage of wood, flint was probably used at all times - Berwick seems to have been the exception.

After 1724 - Outward and Visible Forms

The Cuckmere picture, as far as the structure of the parish churches was concerned, was evidently brighter in 1724 than that in other parts of Sussex, where the bishop found 'poor and ruinous churches'. (72) After 1724 the position is more difficult to assess. If further visitations of the type made by Bishop Bowers were carried out, their records are not extant. Lowerson suggests that there was no improvement. Churchwardens' accounts for the Cuckmere parishes are sparse for the period between 1725 and 1780 and only those of Hellingly are extant for the whole period. If those of other parishes do exist they consist of only a few random pages, or are in poor repair, or badly kept and mainly list those who held office. Often

churchwardens' accounts have become confused with overseers' accounts and deal almost exclusively with problems of poor relief; even at Hellingly, where both churchwardens' and overseers' accounts have been preserved, churchwardens frequently accounted for settlements; the costs of farming out bastard children; and allotments of money to the poor. This suggests that the attention of vestries was concerned more and more with their duties as guardians of the poor and less and less with the upkeep of the church. Their attention was distracted from the need to preserve the fabric of the church towards the more outward and visible functions of parochial life.

The Hellingly accounts provide no conclusive evidence about the fabric of the church. It is possible to trace the decreased cost of visitations over the period 1726-1780, which substantiates the theory that they took place less frequently; in 1726 £1 15s 3d was expended against thirteen shillings and eightpence in 1780. There was, though, an increase in the cost of bread and wine, (£1 2s 0d in 1726 as opposed to £1 14s 0d in 1780), but it is not possible to discover whether building costs were increased or reduced. Entries include payments to various tradesmen but it was not always specifically stated what these payments were for. Certainly, in 1727 Richard Richardson was paid a guinea 'for macening don upon the church' and John Stredwick received six shillings and tenpence 'for work about the church', but in neither case is the amount of work specified; in 1732 £2

5s 6d was expended on 1,300 shingles and Edward Eades was paid one shilling and sevenpence 'when he came to look upon the leads of the church'; in 1735 William Dann supplied 1,700 tiles at £1 5s 6d and all these items suggest that repairs were being carried on at the church, but the parish was also responsible for other building work. In 1742 thirteen shillings was spent for 'work done at Hennards Bridge', (the bridge at Hellingly watermill owned by the Kenward family). In 1744 building work was carried out on the 'scool house' and it is obvious that not all building materials paid for by the churchwardens were necessarily used on the church. (73)

During the incumbency of William Hawes, rector of Berwick from 1768-1784, some repairs were carried out to the church, or at least some attempt was made to lighten the interior, for John Potter was employed by Mr. Hawes to excavate the earth which had piled up against the windows. This was then wheeled to the mound in the churchyard and placed on top of it. The work was carried out by Potter 'when he was a lad'. He died in 1838 aged eighty-four, so the excavations must have been carried out well before 1774 when Berwick church was struck by lightning. (74) This act of God promoted an application for a faculty to demolish the north-east aisle and build a gallery at the west end. (75) The gallery may never have been built, but the church was reduced in size. The Rev. Edward Ellman related that, 'when the spire was struck by lightning and burnt ... and the tower much injured, a buttress was built against the

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tower to hold it up and nothing rebuilt. The north aisle was in an unsafe state, so it was pulled down, the arches separating the nave from the aisle filled up to make an outside wall.' (76) Sixty years later, when Ellman first visited Berwick, things had not improved. He found the church, 'in a very tumbledown state ... the roof almost touched the ground.' There was also a general smell of mouldiness from the vaults. (77)

Henry Petrie painted the interior of Litlington church some time between 1797 and 1809. His watercolour shows a chancel screen in need of repair and pews which differed in size. Although the church boasted a double-decker pulpit with a sounding board and Royal Arms over the chancel arch, neglect is apparent. (78) In Alfriston church life was at a low ebb in the early nineteenth century and 'the sacred edifice itself was in a pitiable condition'. (79) This suggests, unless its decline was sudden and rapid, that the fabric had begun to fall into decay during the latter part of the eighteenth century. The possibility that this may have been the case all down the Cuckmere valley is suggested when one considers the large number of churches restored during the nineteenth century. Chiddingfold chancel was completely re-built in 1864; as was Seaford in about 1812; Waldron was restored in 1862; Arlington, described towards the end of the nineteenth century as being 'in a state of ruin dirt and decay worse than that of any other parish church in Sussex and bare of almost every decent

requisite of worship', was restored after 1889; restoration work costing £1,660 0s 0d was carried out at Alfriston between 1877 and 1888; Litlington was restored in 1863; Heathfield in the 1860's; Hellingly in 1838, when the tower was built to replace the 'mean wooden spire' and again in 1861; Warbleton had windows replaced during the century. The neglect behind these restorations must have been longstanding. (80)

Although minor repairs were carried out in some parishes in the latter years of the eighteenth century, there is very little evidence to show that church buildings were improved after 1724. Some parish guides relate that new plate was donated, or bells re-cast. At Hellingly the bells were repaired at a total cost of £2 15s 6d in 1726. The price included a new bell wheel, which was the most costly item at one guinea, and new ropes costing twelve shillings. (81) Sometimes frivolities were introduced. At Heathfield and Chiddingly there is a suggestion that services were being enlivened. Parishioners in the former parish subscribed £23 for the cost of a gallery, 'for the use of the singers' and in the latter parish an agreement was made by the vestry to build two singing seats in the belfry. The church also has a splendid eighteenth century pulpit with an ornate sounding board. But Chiddingly was, according to the *Eastbourne Guide* published in 1787, 'so much frequented that ... there have been within the memory of persons now living at least fourteen coaches on a Sunday'. (82) Possibly the pulpit is a relic of those

fashionable days. At Hellingly the frivolity took the form of a mounting block, which cost ten shillings in 1741 - the gentry and yeomen in that parish must have departed from church on horseback and not by coach. (83)

Often large sums of money were spent by private individuals in the search for aggrandisement and immortality. The building of private pews by the gentry and their fight to preserve their territory was a serious matter, and the right place in church was sought not only when listening to the sermon, but also after death. An expensive memorial reflected success. Although fashion had altered and no longer favoured the splendour of kneeling figures, such as those of Sir William Thomas and his wife at West Dean, the marble bust by Rysbrack to Sir John Lade at Warbleton was scarcely less flamboyant. At Waldron, the Fullers, father, son and wife, not to be outdone by their kinsman at Warbleton, were commemorated by a black marble coffin, raised on huge clawed feet and flanked by white marble urns. Above this coffin is a pyramidal slab (by which a later Fuller must have been inspired when building Brightling beacon) displaying the Fuller arms and a garland of flowers. At Heathfield and Alfriston marble slabs inform posterity of the importance of the Haffenden and Chowne families respectively, while at West Dean rows of table tombs are a permanent reminder of the aspirations of two families of gentlemen farmers, the Stanfords of Exceat and the Allfreys of Charlton. Though the evidence for

repairs is weak, it is unlikely that people of gentry status would have consented to attend divine service in conditions of complete squalor. Probably decency was maintained, but only the bare minimum of work carried out. Demands on the parish purse increased enormously and parishioners had to provide funds to support repairs to the fabric of the church and the social services as well. Church buildings were neglected and apparently this decline was ignored by those in authority.

Fig 5. Bishop Bowers' Visitation - 1724

Particulars to be enquired into and to be certified in the Return to the Commission.

1st The name of the Parish, as it is truly written, and if the common appellation differs from it, that also to be set down. Also whether the living be a Rectory, a Vicarage Donative or Perpetual Curacy.

2nd The name of the Patron.

3rd The name of the incumbent together with the degree taken in the University, what college and University he was of and when instituted or admitted to the said living.

4th The condition of the church together with an account of the Bible, Common Prayer Book, communion plate and cloth and whether there be a poor box and a chest to put the surplice cloths etc., in and how many bolts there are belonging to the chest.

5th The chancel and if a Vicarage Donative or Curacy, to whom do belong the repairs of the chancel.

6th The Mansion House and outhouses.

7th The number of families residing in the parish, and if any papists how many families. Also if any Protestant Dissenters, how many of them and of what sort.

8th What benefactions or gifts have been bestowed on the Church or poor of the parish, and by whom if it can be known.

9th If anything can be given to the augmentation of the living, what it is and by whom given.

10th The value of the living in the King's Books and the real value of it and whether discharged from the first fruits by the late Act of Parliament.

11th How often Divine Service and Sermons on each Lord Day and whether the living be supplied by the incumbent or a curate, and if by a curate, his name should be returned.

12th How often the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is administered and what number of communicants are usually there.

13th The Glebe, how many acres of woodland and how many of plain land. N.B. The incumbent should be exhorted to get a true terrier of the glebe with its abuttings and boundaries signed by himself and the churchwardens and two or three more of the principle inhabitants of the said parish to be returned at the Chancellor's visitation soon after Michaelmas next.

Fig.6 Bishop Bowers' Visitation 1724 - Condition of Churches and Chancels in the Cuckmere Valley

Parish	Alfriston	Arlington	Berwick	Chiddingly	Heathfield	Hellingly	Litlington	Lullington	Seaford	Waldron	Warbleton	West Dean
Condition of Church	Well healed except N wing. Some tiles wanting	Body of church well healed	In good repair	In good repair without. Within walls want whitelining	Outside pretty good. Inside foul, wants whitewashing	Tolerable good repair	Pretty good repair	Chancel only standing in good repair & newly whitewashed	Wants beautifying has some dangerous cracks on outside	In tolerable repair wants planking	Without in good repair. Within wants white-washing	Good repair
Seats	Irregular want boarding at bottom	Several want boarding at bottom, some want mending		Some want repairing	Old but some newly repaired, some new-built	Some want boarding at bottom	Some need boarding	Forms for people to sit on			Bottoms of seats out of order	
Chancel	In good repair	Wants whiting on S side & on ridge tiles at the top. E window wants mending.*	In good repair	Ceiling wants mending & walls white-washing. Rails about communion table want mending	In good repair Seats want a little mending	In tolerable good repair except part that belongs to Mr. Cruttenden of Burwash	In pretty good repair. Some tiles to be laid on S side	No chancel	No chancel	In tolerable repair	In good repair	In good repair
Owner	Parsonage	Parsonage Preb. of Woodhorne		John Fuller of Rosehill, Esq.	John Fuller, Esq. Tenant of Preb.	Hon. Mr. Pelham Mr. Cruttenden					Rector	
Bible	Good	Good	Good		Good	Good	Good	Bible with P.B.	Imperfect	Good	Good	Good
C.P.B.	Good	Good	Good		Good	Good	Good		Bad	Good	Good	Good
Pulpit cloth and cushion	Good	Very bad	Good	Good	Old but good				Good			
Cloth for Reading Desk	Good	None							None			
Cloth for Communion Table	2 good	1 linen	1 linen	A good carpet	Woollen and linen good		None	No communion table	None			Carpet & cloth
Plate	1 silver cup with cover, 1 pewter flagon, basin and plate	1 silver cup & cover, 1 pewter flagon	2 pewter flagons, 1 pewter plate	1 silver cup, 1 silver salver	Silver chalice, large silver flagon	Silver cup Pewter flagon	Chalice		1 silver cup with cover	Silver flagon chalice and plate	Pewter flagon handsome cup small silver patten	Silver cup and cover, silver plate
Chest	1 (3 locks)	1 (1 lock)	1 (1 lock)	2 (3 locks)	None				1 (2 locks)		None	a chest

*Another chancel belonging to a farm called Claverham 'much out of repair the healing and some of the timbers being very bad'.

CHAPTER IV - THE FABRIC OF THE CHURCH - REFERENCES

- 1) A. Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War*, (1975) 115.
- 2) ESRO PAR 292/9/1.
- 3) ESRO PAR 501/1/1/2.
- 4) W.E. Tate, *The Parish Chest*, (1969) 95.
- 5) Churchwardens Presentments for the years 1674-7 inclusive have been printed in H. Johnstone, *Churchwardens Presentments*, SRS 50 (1949). E.H.W. Dunkin's papers in the British Library which include extensive extracts from records in the Bishops Registry at Lewes made by Dunkin in April 1888, B.L. Add Mss 39444, 5, 6, & 7 have been checked against Registers of Presentments, Bills of Detection, and Instance Books, now deposited at the Diocesan Record Office, at Chichester WSRO Ep II/15/4-11, Ep II/4/39-46.
- 6) J.H. Cooper 'A Religious Census of Sussex 1676' SAC 45 (1902) 142.
- 7) The activities of dissenters and the reaction to them is discussed in full in Chapters IX, X and XI.
- 8) B.L. Add Mss 39445 f 70v; Add Mss 39446 f 15v.
- 9) B.L. Add Mss 39445 ff 66v & 72v.
- 10) B.L. Add Mss 39445 f 70v.
- 11) B.L. Add Mss 39445 ff 64v & 66v.
- 12) ESRO PAR 292/9/1; 372/9/2; 375/9/1.
- 13) ESRO PAR 239/9/1-3 & 19; PAR 375/9/1.
- 14) B.L. Add Mss. 39445 ff 64v & 80.
- 15) Johnstone 6, 25, 44.
- 16) B.L. 39445 f 66v.
- 17) Johnstone 23; B.L. Add Mss 39445 f 70v.
- 18) B.L. 39445 f 83v; WSRO Ep II 4/39.
- 19) Johnstone 7, 23, 47, B.L. Add Mss 39445 ff 70v, 74, 79v; WSRO Ep II 15/5 f 43.
- 20) Johnstone 31, 25, 48.
- 21) B.L. 39445 f 65.
- 22) B.L. Add Mss 39445 ff 64v, 68v, 70v.
- 23) B.L. Add Mss 39445 ff 70v, 79v.
- 24) B.L. Add Mss 39445 ff 8, 61v, 64v, 68v, 70v, 78v; 39446 f 66v.
- 25) B.L. Add Mss. 39445 ff 50v, 66v, 77v.
- 26) B.L. Add Mss 39445 f 87v.
- 27) A.C. Piper, *Alfriston*, (1970) 27; ESRO PAR 239/1/1/1.
- 28) B.L. Add Mss 39447 f 51.
- 29) B.L. Add Mss 39445 ff 21, 51v, 69v, 72v; WSRO Ep II 15/5 f13. 30) ESRO PAR 372/9/1. This single sheet of churchwardens' accounts reveals that at this period the cost of oak shingles (16/6d for 550) compares very favourably with the cost of laundering a surplice (5/-) and later costs.
- 31) B.L. Add Mss 39446 f 14v.
- 32) ESRO PAR 375/9/1.
- 33) WSRO Ep II 18/1.
- 34) B.L. Add Mss 39445 f 80.

- 35) A. Barr-Hamilton, 'Excavations at Lullington Church', SAC 108, (1980) 1; J. Woolridge, 'Alciston in the Later Middle Ages', unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Bristol (1965) 16.
- 36) D. Bogarde, *A Postillion Struck by Lightning* (1977) 62.
- 37) F. Pagden, *History of Alfriston*, (1899) passim; Ed. M. Burchall, *Sussex Hearth Tax Assessments 1662, No.2, Pevensey Rape*, (Brighton 1980) 61, 62.
- 38) Johnstone 44, 60; ESRO AMS 5567/1.
- 39) B.L. Add Mss 39445 f 8.
- 40) B.L. Add Mss 39445 ff 49 & 77v.
- 41) Piper 28; ESRO AMS 5567/1; Pagden 46.
- 42) ESRO SAS E/17. The disappearance of the Parsonage at Arlington is discussed further in Chapter VI.
- 43) WSRD Ep II 15/4 ff 40 & 66v.
- 44) B.L. Add Mss 39445 f 80.
- 46) WSRD Ep II 18/2 - See Fig 4.
- 47) J. Venn & J. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, (1922) 833; F. Lucas, *Heathfield Memorials*, (1910) 29; WSRD Ep II 25/1 f 57; Ep II 18/2. Although Jordan took his B.A. at Pembroke College, Oxford his M.A. was awarded from Jesus College, Cambridge.
- 48) Tate 90.
- 49) Tate 91.
- 50) E.B. Ellman, *Recollections of a Sussex Parson*, (1912) 133.
- 51) B.L. Add Mss 39446 f 14.
- 52) R. Gough, *The History of Myddle*, (1981) 76; P.S. Godman, 'An Allotment of Sitings in Sedlescombe Church', SAC 52, (1909) 96.
- 53) WSRD Ep II 25/1; ESRO W/A.30/96 & A.38/97.
- 54) B.L. Add Mss 39446 f 29.
- 55) WSRD Ep II 25/1 f 11; Ep II 15/7 f 18v.
- 56) WSRD Ep II 25/1 f 47.
- 57) ESRO Ep II 25/1.
- 58) ESRO AMS 5567/1.
- 59) ESRO PAR 232/1/1/2.
- 60) B.L. Add Mss 39446 f 40v.
- 61) ESRO PAR 239/7/8.
- 62) Johnstone 24.
- 63) ESRO PAR 375/9/1.
- 64) M.A. Lower, *A Parochial History of Chiddingly*, (Lewes 1862) 34.
- 65) Johnstone 26.
- 66) B.L. Add Mss 39446 f 53.
- 67) Lower 34.
- 68) B.L. Add Mss 39446 f 32.
- 69) ESRO PAR 375/9/1.
- 70) ESRO PAR 375/9/1.
- 71) ESRO A.2478.
- 72) J. Lowerson, *A Short History of Sussex*, (1980) 128.
- 73) ESRO PAR 375/9/1.
- 74) Ellman 26.
- 75) WSRD Ep II 27/19.
- 76) Ellman 157.

- 77) Ellman 281.
- 78) No. 214 in the Sharpe Collection of watercolours in the possession of the Sussex Archaeological Society, and housed at Michelham Priory, Upper Dicker, Hailsham.
- 79) Pagden 14.
- 80) Information from current parish guides. Petrie's watercolours include exteriors of all Cuckmere churches and show the spire at Hellingly (now replaced by a tower) and a tower at Berwick (where there is now a spire.)
- 81) ESRO PAR 375/9/1.
- 82) ESRO PAR 372/1/1/3; Lower 4; ESRO PAR 292/37/2; Chiddingly Church guide.
- 83) ESRO PAR 375/9/1.

THE ANGLICAN CLERGY - ILifestyle

The Cuckmere Valley lacks a Parson Woodforde. Though some incumbents in this rural backwater achieved academic fame, none appears to have been a diarist and none kept personal accounts, in the same way as the Rev. Giles Moore of Horsted Keynes. Moore's *Journal*, like Woodforde's *Diary*, provides detailed information about his tithes, rates, taxes, servants' wages and the cost of food and drink. It also demonstrates his agricultural adventures and his insatiable addiction to book buying.(1) His library must have been the envy of every Sussex bibliophile. Giles Moore's activities, as revealed in his *Journal* would have had some elements in common with the lifestyle of every Sussex parson, although a similarity of tastes cannot be guaranteed. However, a certain interest in literature can be assumed among Cuckmere parsons. Ezekiel Charke, who was Rector of Waldron at the same time that Moore was at Horsted Keynes, left his son and namesake, 'all the best of my books except the three volumes of the Book of Martyrs,' which were willed to his daughter Sarah.(2) Charke's successor, John Tattersall (1671-1707) left, 'to John my only son all my books whatsoever.'(3) John Herring, Vicar of Chiddingly (1748-1777) left a 'library of books', in trust for his son, but although this sounds as if it may have been a sizeable collection, the actual number of books contained in this

and the other bequests is unknown. (4)

In Heathfield the incumbents were provided with a sizeable literary collection for, by his will made in 1736, Richard Wilkin, an eminent bookseller and the elder son of William Wilkin, Vicar of that parish from 1654-1699, established a library of books for the use of future residing Vicars of Heathfield - the remnants of which still exist, though they are now housed in the Diocesan Library at Chichester. In 1745 William Preston (1731-1771) made a catalogue of the books. There were two hundred and twenty nine volumes, 'fixt in a neat case bequeathed with them,' which cover a very wide range of interests from periodicals such as, *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, through the classics, history, heraldry, literature and gardening, to essentials for an eighteenth century parson, like the *Clergyman's Vademecum* and a tract on the *Defence and Case of Pluralities*, although it did not contain a copy of George Herbert's, *A Priest to the Temple; or the Country Parson*, which outlined ideals for the English clergyman. There were, however, many books of sermons and religious works. (5) A comparison with the eighteenth century library of the Rev. William Haley of Brightling reveals many similar volumes. (6) Though it was probably not equal to that of Giles Moore, the Heathfield library appears to have represented a standard clerical collection of books.

It is not possible to tell whether, like Parson Moore, any of the seventeenth century Cuckmere incumbents purchased curtains and coverlets from William Clowser, the itinerant

upholsterer from Chichester, who came, 'about into the County with his pack on horseback,' but the possibility cannot be excluded.(7) In the Warbleton and Heathfield neighbourhood the requirements of parsons' wives, seeking to refurbish their wardrobes and their household draperies might well have been met at the establishment run by Samuel Store, mercer of Warbleton, whose inventory suggests that his shop held goods superior to those which might normally have been found in a village store at this period.(8)

Similarly, it is not possible to tell whether any of the eighteenth century Cuckmere incumbents emulated Parson Woodforde - who showed much interest in good food - and entertained poor parishioners to lunch on Christmas Day, though this had evidently been done in Berwick during the time of Parson Nutt (1612-1653). Nutt appears to have initiated the idea in Berwick but the celebration of Christmas had been forbidden during the Commonwealth, so the habit may have been discontinued by 1660, especially since Nutt had warned his successors, 'whereas I doo feast at Chrismas all the Parishioners; yet you are to knowe that there is no such custom to requier it of the Parsons hereafter as a duty or custom, for I was the first that did it ...'(9) There are no clues among parish documents to show whether this custom was revived here, or in any of the other Cuckmere parishes.

The lifestyle and the intellectual and professional ability of eighteenth century anglican clergy have often

been condemned both by nineteenth century novelists and by twentieth century historians. The picture which is currently accepted is one which portrays ill-educated boors, having a tendency 'to a life of social enjoyment, drinking and hunting, with light official duties, who were not expected to preach.' (10) Certainly, since there were many kinship and friendship ties between the Cuckmere clergy and the local gentry, some Cuckmere parsons must have dined or hunted with the local gentry, though perhaps not with the abandon suggested by Porter, who writing of the eighteenth century, states, 'The Anglican clergy, politicked, tally ho'ed, farmed and guzzled with the squires.' (11) Although the famous Charlston hunt existed in Western Sussex in 1690, it appears that neither shooting nor hunting was seriously pursued in the Weald as sport at this period. (12) Neither the East Sussex nor the Southdown hunt, later to operate in the Cuckmere area, was founded until the nineteenth century, and the entries in local churchwardens' accounts, where payments of one shilling each were regularly made for foxes' heads, indicate that these creatures were treated as vermin and not preserved for the hunt. (13) For a time, in the middle years of the eighteenth century the Fullers of Brightling, did keep hounds and parsons living near their estates may have been invited to join the field, but this pack was reduced in 1756, soon after Rose Fuller succeeded as head of the family. (14) Hunting, between the years 1660-1780, must have been a remote and transitory pastime for Cuckmere clergy.

Education and Professional Ability

Criticism of the clergy was also levied by their contemporaries. One writer who was especially condemnatory was John Eachard, who published, *The Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy and Religion*, in 1670, a work which provided one of the corner stones of later criticism.(15) He contended that contempt for the clergy was widespread - mainly because they were poor and ignorant. Eachard, who was an Oxford don, was not without critics himself, for his academic standards were extremely high. Pruett has argued that his view that parsons were ignorant was not shared by the majority of their parishioners, and in at least one Cuckmere parish there is evidence that the parson was valued for his education. In Chiddingly, in 1659 the Vestry had made an agreement with Will Rogers the minister, whereby he agreed to audit and write up their monthly accounts.(16)

It has been shown that a particular effort was made to improve the standards required of ministers in the Church of England at the end of the sixteenth century and that the clergy had advanced by 1630, not only in their educational achievements, where there had been a large scale national improvement, but in their attitude to their work. It was understood that the minister, 'should offer individual and loving care and advice to each member of his congregation, as well as administer a fatherly discipline.'(17) Jenkins has shown that in Sussex by 1640 many parishes, 'were served

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by a scholarly minister instead of a merely literate priest as in medieval times', although Foster, in a recently published article, has shed some doubt on the size of the graduate clergy in 1603.(18)

)
The puritans 'craved a learned, preaching ministry,' and their enthusiasm in this respect appears to have been fruitful. During the period 1660-1780 there were eighty-eight incumbents in the eleven Cuckmere parishes - Lullington has been omitted, as it was frequently without a minister, or shared one with another parish. It has been possible to trace the academic records of more than two thirds of these men, who were all, with the exception of one man who had gained a degree at the University of Edinburgh, graduates of Oxford or Cambridge. In some cases, where the clergy have possessed names like Thomas Davies or John Lloyd, it has been impossible to establish identity. Most of the men whose credentials are uncertain were ministers at the time of the Restoration or soon after.(19) In 1724 all incumbents in the valley had graduated from either Oxford or Cambridge.(Fig. 7.)

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Although the acquisition of a university degree is not, in itself, a guarantee of any great academic attainment, it does suggest that a certain standard of literacy had been reached. Most incumbents had also been ordained and licenced to preach. Therefore, it can be assumed that they were considered capable of attending to the cure of souls, of reading divine service and of preaching a sermon. According to canon law, candidates for

priesthood had to provide testimonials from college authorities or parish ministers, which vouched for their learning, personal morality and doctrinal knowledge. They were also supposed to have been examined by the bishop (or his subordinate) who performed their ordination. (20)

Obviously, suitability was interpreted in different ways by individual bishops and men with high academic qualifications may not have possessed a vocation, while some who were less learned may have been more pious, or more in tune with their parishioners.

Sermons

The suggestion that the clergy were not required to preach must be challenged. Bearing in mind the strong predilection for puritan doctrines which was prevalent in Wealden parishes, and given the propensity of puritan families to 'hunger' for a sermon, this was obviously an important part of the church service. It is not surprising to learn from Giles Moore that provision for a substitute preacher was made even when he was absent from his parish for only a short period. In 1660 he paid a Mr. Hull ten shillings a day to preach two sermons for him on such an occasion. He also drew attention to a current practice by ministers, of preaching in each other's parishes, by way of exchange. (21) The important item at this period seems to have been the preaching of a sermon. It is not unreasonable to assume that this was also the case in the wealden parishes of the Cuckmere, where the necessity of

providing a sermon was evident in 1724.

The returns made to Bishop Bowers' visitation in that year show that in the three most northerly wealden parishes bordering the Cuckmere - Heathfield, Waldron and Warbleton - Divine Service with sermon was held twice every Lord's Day, although in Heathfield the services were held only once daily in the two shortest months of the year. (Fig. 7) On the other hand, the sacrament of Holy Communion was administered only four times a year, at the three great festivals and usually at Michaelmas. In the lower valley, Divine Service with sermon was held once a week - though in the tiny church of Lullington, only once a month. At Lullington the service of Holy Communion was never held. Elsewhere in the lower valley this sacrament was celebrated only three times a year. In all parishes except Heathfield, where a curate was in charge, services were said to be conducted by the incumbent. (22) Divine Service and sermon once weekly appears to have been the norm in most Sussex parishes at this time. (23) The two Sunday services at Warbleton, Waldron and Heathfield were unusual and could have been due to an excess of religious zeal on the part of the local population, in keeping with the religious history of the area, and also to the desire of local clergy to establish the authority of the Church of England on this wildest part of the district. Caplan has shown that where there were, 'indications of spiritual vigour, the nonconformists were also strongly represented.' (24)

In each parish Divine Service 'with sermon' was

stressed and this, at least, indicates that the preaching of a sermon was deemed a necessary adjunct to the service and refutes, for this area, and at this early stage in the eighteenth century, the suggestion that parsons were not expected to preach; the presentation of a 'costly' pulpit cloth and cushion by a gentleman in Alfriston and the acquisition of the fine pulpit at Chiddingly during the period substantiates the belief that sermons were important. Giles Watkins, Vicar of Chiddingly (1725-1728), whose will suggests that he was not particularly wealthy, bequeathed to his nephew Nathaniel, 'one small gold ring and forty of my sermons'. (25) Since Nathaniel (after the Vicar's wife, who was residuary legatee) was the chief beneficiary of Watkins' will, it would appear that these sermons had been highly prized. Sermons were also preached at funerals and this embellishment of the burial service provided extra remuneration for the presiding minister. At Waldron the table of fees drawn up by the incumbent in 1736 shows that the following charges were made, 'for a funeral sermon, text not chosen - ten shillings; for a funeral sermon, text chosen - one guinea.' (26) When a funeral sermon was requested, this must nearly always have been the wish of the bereaved relatives, since only two testators in the period 1660-1720 requested a funeral sermon in their wills. They were both inhabitants of Warbleton.

Few direct references have been found to shed light on the quality or originality of sermons preached by Cuckmere

parsons. Heathfield vicars may have found inspiration among the volumes of sermons in their library, while others may have taken Dr. Johnson's advice and borrowed from the work of others. (27) George Hall, Rector of Berwick (1654-1669) was evidently a great scholar who could preach a good sermon. The claims of his monumental inscription, 'His name speaks all learning humane and divine', were substantiated by Giles Moore, who noted that Hall had been chosen to preach at St. Michael's in Lewes on the occasion of the archdeacon's visitation in May 1666. He chose as his text, 'Peace be unto you'. (28)

There were other eminent scholars among Cuckmere Valley parsons, notably Edward Clark B.D., admitted to Arlington in 1768, who was chaplain to the Duke of Newcastle. (29) Unfortunately, the likelihood of Clarke's having preached frequently at Arlington is extremely remote, since he was also Rector of Buxted and resident in that parish, where he, 'settled down to a quiet literary life'. (30) Another protege' of the Duke of Newcastle, Thomas Hurdis D.D., Vicar of Seaford between 1733 and 1773, and called 'the greatest pluralist in Sussex' was adjudged a splendid preacher by Thomas Turner, shopkeeper of East Hoathly, (a neighbouring parish to Waldron) where the Duke of Newcastle's main Sussex residence at Halland was sited. Although Hurdis was undoubtedly a frequent absentee from Seaford, and seems to have been resident at Bishopstone, he may at least have preached at Seaford on occasion, particularly when the Duke was electioneering in the Cinque Port. Turner, who was

scathing about, 'the idle lazy way of preaching which many of our clergy are got into,' based his approbation of Dr. Hurdis on a happening in East Hoathly when on 22nd April 1759, 'we had a sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. Hurdis and again in the afternoon; and in my opinion he is as fine a churchman as almost ever I heard.' (31)

Turner also commented favourably upon another local parson who preached at East Hoathly on Sunday, December 26th 1756. 'In the morning the Rev. Mr. Hamlin of Waldron preached at our church. We had an excellent sermon, (Mr. Hamlin, in my opinion being the compleatest churchman of any clergyman in this neighbourhood, and seems to take a great deal of pains in the discharge of his duty.)' (32) Hamlin may have been the curate at Waldron, although his name does not appear in the register in that capacity. The Rector of Waldron in 1756 was Thomas James, who was also Vicar of East Grinstead, and most probably an absentee from Waldron. It is unfortunate that Turner's diary does not commence until 1754. Had it begun earlier he might have commented upon the capabilities of Dr. Thomas Hargreaves, Rector of East Hoathly (1719-41) and Rector of Waldron (1729-41), another Newcastle favourite, who was an eminent churchman and as such held several important preferments. He was Prebendary of Chichester from 1723-32, Chaplain to the King 1724-39, Prebendary of Westminster 1730-4, and Dean of Chichester 1739-41. (33)

Turner is virtually the only witness to the quality of

sermons preached in the area at this time and although Dr. Hurdis, whom he praised, was probably a more competent churchman than many of his contemporaries, Turner also vouched for the zeal of one local curate. However, he seems to have made particular mention of these two men because they were an improvement upon the norm. In the 1670's Eachard had complained that far too many parsons used obscure Greek phrases or 'tried to bring in Twenty Poets and Philosophers ...into an hour's talk', and fifty years later Jonathan Swift had complained about the use of obscure terms among all types of clergy, but had maintained that Greek and Latin were 'almost entirely driven out of the pulpit.' He had conceded that most clergy were preaching simple ethical precepts that could be applied to daily life. (34) One Cuckmere parson, not content with his earthly prowess, extended his sermonising beyond the grave. An inscription on the tomb of Thomas Baker, Vicar of Chiddingly from 1777-1795 bears witness to his endeavour, though if the literary quality of his sermons was similar to that of his epitaph, Baker's parishioners can have found little to uplift them:-

'Though dead I preach if e'er with ill success
Living I strove the important Truth to press
Your precious, your immortal soul to save,
Hear me at least, oh hear me from the grave.'

Testimonials

Monumental inscriptions, though, since they usually reflect the sentiment that nothing but good should be spoken of the dead, cannot always be admitted as reliable historical evidence. As far as favourable character

references are concerned, they are often all that remains, and in the Cuckmere Valley are very sparse. A memorial to William Wilkin, Vicar of Heathfield (1655-1699) relates that, 'He was faithful and diligent in the duties of his sacred function; piety towards God, charity and benevolence to mankind were the pleasure and entertainment as well as the business of his life'. Thomas Eades of Chiddingly, who wrote his own memorial inscription - apparently a favourite pastime among Chiddingly vicars - described himself as 'a faithful shepherd'. Having been forced into retirement in 1689, when he refused to take the oath to William and Mary, Eades went to live in a property that he owned in the parish, where, judging by a bequest made in his will to the parish clerks of Chiddingly, he spent his declining years fairly acrimoniously. The bequest of twenty shillings a year to the clerks was to ensure that 'the stone that is laid upon my grave shall be in no way abused, nor the subscription defaced.' In this eventuality, the beneficiary clerks were to, 'lay down another ... every way equal to the first,' at their own cost. This made the bequest a doubtful asset. However, the members of seven families, with whom the parson had evidently quarreled, were to be excluded from this bequest, should their members at any time become parish clerk.(35) Perhaps these seven families were glad to be excluded; the terms of Eades' bequest imply that here there was a distinct rift in clerical/parishioner relationships.

Among all the Cuckmere parsons only one received an

unsolicited testimonial. The burial of John Tattersall, Rector of Waldron (1671-1707) was recorded in the parish register and followed by this tribute, 'by all his parishioners and other acquaintances highly esteemed and justly much lamented.' (36) Even this eulogy may have been written by his son and namesake, also a clerk in holy orders, who was living in the parish. The elder Tattersall had hopes that he would be succeeded in the rectory by his son, for in his will he wrote, 'I bequeath the next presentation to my son John Tattersall and desire my trustees to see him installed presently after my death.' (37) But presentation to the Rectory was not in the gift of Tattersall. The patron was the Earl of Dorset. He duly presented the next incumbent who was installed six months later. The younger Tattersall became Rector of Hangleton and of Chipstead in Surrey. (38)

Patronage

When stressing the importance of patronage by magnate families, Fletcher suggested that in the early seventeenth century gentry control of advowsons was often the basis of lasting friendships between gentry and clergy. (39) By the second half of that century, this kind of friendly patronage may have existed in only one Cuckmere parish - that of West Dean, where Sir William Thomas was patron. When the Thomases built and moved to a new manor house in Folkington, the West Dean rectors were also appointed by the family to the new parish, and thereafter West Dean and Folkington were

sometimes held in plurality. Elsewhere in the valley there was no chance of such friendships being formed. The advowsons of one third of the churches were controlled by the ecclesiastical authorities themselves, either in the person of the Bishop of Chichester (Lullington), or by various prebendaries of that cathedral, (Arlington, Heathfield and Seaford.) Alfriston was held by the Duchy of Lancaster and administered by the Lord Chancellor. Litlington was in the hands of non-resident gentry and Warbleton was held by absentee trustees. The advowson of Berwick, having been sold by the Sackvilles, was usually purchased by successive rectors.(40) In fact, only three advowsons were held by magnate families.(Fig.7) The Sackvilles owned Waldron and Chiddingly. Since they were no longer resident in Sussex they appear to have had little interest in either parish, and frequent presentations were made at Chiddingly by the monarch, 'through lapse of time'. At Waldron, they finally broke the entail and sold the advowson.(41) At Hellingly the patronage of the living was owned by the Pelhams, who certainly did not establish lasting friendships with the incumbents, though they used them and the gift of the living for their own purposes. It is not surprising that the one cleric in the Cuckmere Valley, during the period 1660-1780, to achieve episcopal status had been Vicar of Hellingly and a Pelham protege'. He was one of the executors of the will of Thomas Lord Pelham, father of the Duke of Newcastle.(42) This was the Rev. Thomas Bowers D.D., (Vicar 1707-1717) at which time he

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was also Vicar of Icklesham and Prebendary of Canterbury.
He was appointed Archdeacon of Canterbury in 1721 and became
Bishop of Chichester in 1722.(43)

Although lasting friendships may not have been formed
between clergy and their gentry patrons, patronage on a
slightly different level was, for a period, one of the most
important considerations in the lives of almost all Cuckmere
clergy. The Duke of Newcastle organised patronage on a
national scale.(44) Naturally, the advowson of Hellingly
was used for the furtherance of his political campaigns, but
with the gift of so many high ecclesiastical offices at his
command it is not surprising that at times he omitted to
present to the small country living in his personal
patronage. This happened in 1754, when the Duke was
heavily involved in international affairs, and the living
was vacant for three and a half years.

Normally the Duke was besieged with requests from hopeful
applicants and their friends when any benefice over which he
had influence fell vacant. Letters poured in from all over
the country, often before the existing incumbent had drawn
his final breath.(45) Requests for advancement related
also to lesser clergy. When Dr. Hurdis' father, who had
been Vicar of Ringmer, died in 1733 the new incumbent had
scarcely been installed when the Duke was the recipient of
correspondence concerning the choice of a new curate in that
parish. William Hay, Esq., of Glyndbourne, a loyal
political supporter of Newcastle's, informed the Duke that

he had entertained the new minister at Glyndebourne and had suggested that he might consider Francis Weller, 'who now has the curacy of Heathfield to be his curate.' Hay reminded the Duke that Weller was, 'firm to your interest,' and submitted that his Grace would be well advised to sanction the appointment.(46) However, better things were in store for Weller, who was certainly very active in the support of Newcastle's policies during the 1734 election, attending political meetings with Burnett, the Duke's agent. Burnett also recommended Weller to the Duke, '...Mr. Weller being very industorouse and I hope ... will not be forgott.'(47) When the living at Hellingly fell vacant at the end of 1734, Weller was appointed. He seems, however, to have been more interested in 'politicking with the gentry', than in attending to his parochial duties, for his successor at Hellingly wrote in the registers, 'I found no Register regularly kept from the year 1725 to the death of the Rev. Mr. Weller, who died February 8th 1742.'(48)

Weller's death involved the Duke in yet another surge of correspondence from candidates and their supporters. An abridged version of the letters and petitions to, 'My Lord Duke about the Hellingly living,' indicates that there were at least four on the short list, one of whom was sponsored by Sir William Gage. However, the successful applicant, the Rev. James Davies (1742-1751), was supported by 'a petition from the major part of the inhabitants of Hellingly that are freeholders ... setting forth their good opinion and well liking towards him...' An added incentive that

appealed to the freeholders was that Davies had announced his intention of keeping a school in the village. (49)

Newcastle's correspondence shows that if the Cuckmere clergy did not hunt with the gentry, they certainly 'politicked' with them. Maintaining the Duke's interest in the political sphere was obviously an aid to clerical preferment and the patronage of Hellingly was exploited by the Pelhams. There is little doubt that Weller was appointed to Hellingly because of his political allegiance to the Duke. It is equally clear that the Duke believed that individual ministers had great influence among their flock, for the fact that the freeholders of Hellingly had also been in favour of appointing Davies as successor had weighed more heavily with him than the recommendation of his gentry supporter Sir William Gage.

Further evidence of Newcastle's belief in the influence of the local clergy is shown in his letters from Dr. James Hargreaves. Dr. Hargreaves, Rector of Waldron and also of East Hoathly was, like Dr. Hurdis of Seaford, a regular correspondent of the Duke's and one who continually exerted his influence in an attempt to win over those supporting the opposition. Hargreaves wrote to the Duke in August 1733, 'In obedience to your commands I went this day to Waldron to read prayers and preached to the baronet.' (This was Sir Thomas Dyke of Horam, a supporter of John Fuller of Brightling, the opposition candidate.) After the service several local gentlemen, including Sir Thomas, Mr. Offley of

Possingworth and Mr. Fuller of Gatehouse, who were both kinsmen of John Fuller, 'came into the parsonage house and for an hour or two we had a great deal of conversation upon different subjects....I did not perceive Sir Thomas disposed to enter into any controversey about the present situation of affairs ... but after a pipe or two smoaked, though he delayed as long as he could to prevent ... my correspondence with Mr. Offley and Mr. Fuller ... he left us to ourselves. As soon as he was gone I took Mr. Offley and Mr. Fuller into the garden and read parts of your Grace's letter to me.' (50)

Although the Duke of Newcastle only owned the advowson of one Cuckmere church personally, he certainly controlled the majority of parsons who served them. His supporters were well rewarded. One man who benefited from his association with the Duke also had another patron. This man was George Jordan, Vicar of Heathfield (1713-1731). Although he was, apparently, 'a whig, zealous in the Duke of Newcastle's interest', Jordan evidently left nothing to chance, for he married the daughter of Dr. Thomas Bowers, the Bishop of Chichester. In the year that he was married Jordan was appointed Canon of Chichester and presented to the Vicarage of Burwash where, having built a new vicarage house, he moved from Heathfield in 1721. Later he became Prebendary of Sidlesham. He resigned as Vicar of Heathfield on becoming Rector of Ivychurch, Kent in 1731. (51) By 1733 he was sitting as Chancellor at the Ecclesiastical Court of Lewes. In 1734 he was described as the 'lawfully constituted commissary or principal official

through the Archdeaconry of Lewes'. (52) However, his ecclesiastical duties did not prevent him from continuing his political activities and he featured frequently in Burnett's correspondence with the Duke. Jordan busied himself entertaining the freeholders of Burwash and some from other parishes who were opposed to Newcastle's interest. One of these was the Rev. Thomas Barton, Rector of Warbleton. Jordan, who Burnett described as being, 'very harty in the case', invited Barton to dine at Burwash Vicarage, on 9th July 1733, where Burnett, 'took an oportunity to speake to him who sayd he beggd to be axkews promising for the present.' (53) Barton evidently excused himself at a later date too, for in August Burnett wrote, 'I believe it is in vain to say any more to Mr. Barton', and indeed Barton voted against the Pelham candidates in the 1734 election. (54) Among Cuckmere parsons he and his friend William Preston of Heathfield were, apparently, alone in opposing the Duke's candidates.

Support for the Pelham cause sometimes produced more vigorous opposition than that shown by the parson of Warbleton, and Jordan suffered some discomfort in his campaigns. Burnett related that in September 1733, after a day's electioneering at Burwash, 'some of the soldiers that are quartered hear wass gott Drunk and insulted the Chancolor and some of the gentlemen but we soon got the better of them.' (55) There was obviously some danger in being one of Newcastle's team. Possibly because they were

afraid of similar repercussions, or because they were less politically persuaded, or less ambitious, other incumbents did not support the Duke with the same energy as Jordan and Hargreaves. William Masters (Vicar of Hellingly 1717-1734) contented himself with providing information about the probable voting habits of Hellingly freeholders. (56)

The Pelham mansion at Halland and the smaller residence at Bishopstone near Seaford were bases from which the Duke of Newcastle engineered campaigns in the county. At Halland he entertained on a lavish scale and other Cuckmere parsons enjoyed his hospitality, apart from those who gave active support to his electioneering. For instance, banquets were held on three successive days after Christmas 1741 for freeholders, clergy and gentry. This was probably an annual event. They were also held at other times of the year, especially during election campaigns and during periods of national rejoicing. Guest lists on such occasions include the names of the Rev. Samuel Isaacs, (Vicar of Arlington 1719-1738), Rev. Edward Luxford (Vicar of Chiddingly 1728-1737) and his successor the Rev John Lloyd (1727-1748), besides those of Dr. Hargreaves, Dr. Jordan, the Rev. Weller and the Rev. Masters.

One special occasion which elicited Pelham hospitality was a celebration held to mark the King's birthday and the wedding of the Prince and Princess of Orange on 31st October 1733. Bonfires were held all over the county. In the Cuckmere region parishioners from Warbleton celebrated at Burwash, where Dr. Jordan was in charge of ceremonies -

possibly their exclusion from Halland was occasioned by the lack of support for the Pelhams displayed by their rector, rather than by the distance they might have had to travel. In the lower valley celebrations were held at Seaford. The people of Arlington had a bonfire of their own, powder being sent to them for that purpose by Mr. Johnson, the Duke's agent in Hailsham. The majority flocked to Halland. They came from Hellingly, Chiddingly, Heathfield and Waldron - about four hundred people in all, 'farmers and their sons and young people ... and Dr. Hargreaves gave favours to all the men that carried the mustketts to the boonfire...' (57) As well as Dr. Hargreaves, Mr. Lloyd of Chiddingly and Mr. Masters of Hellingly were among the clergy present on this occasion. Whether they were enjoyed at the celebration of a royal birthday and wedding, or as an election entertainment, 'the fame of the Homeric banquets with which the Duke used to regale his tenantry and dependents survived in Sussex until the nineteenth century.' (58) Among the Duke's ten cooks were four Frenchmen, regarded by shopkeeper Thomas Turner with some scorn. (59) It is to be hoped that their presence in the kitchens at Halland raised the standard of the food served at these banquets above the level normally enjoyed by the reverend gentlemen from the Cuckmere Valley, who seized their chance to 'guzzle with the squires.'

The Duke's hospitality and patronage provided encouragement to the politically unaligned and rewards for

the converted, but patronage could be extended to the clergy not only by noble patrons, but by members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Dr. Jordan of Heathfield and Burwash may have been a man of great ability, but to some extent he must have owed his advancement in his career to his patron the Duke of Newcastle and to his marriage to the Bishop of Chichester's daughter. To some extent he followed in the footsteps of John Wright, Vicar of Arlington (1709-1719), the son of John Wright of London, gentleman. Wright was another Cuckmere cleric, who ensured his ecclesiastical success by marriage to the Bishop's daughter. His bride was Margaret, daughter of John Williams, Bishop of Chichester from 1696-1709. In the year of his marriage Wright was appointed Canon of St. Paul's and Vicar of Amberley in Western Sussex. By 1699 he was a Canon of Chichester and by 1701 he had been created Chancellor of that cathedral, an office he held until his death in 1719. He also became chaplain to the Bishop and, in the course of his career, he was appointed to several Sussex livings, including Arlington and Pevensey, both of which he held at his death. (60)

The extracts from the Newcastle correspondence, while demonstrating the political facet of patronage, are valuable also because they are the only surviving evidence which relates to the social lives of Cuckmere incumbents. They tell us something about the relationship between Dr. Hargreaves and his gentry parishioners, who smoked pipes together and walked in the parsonage garden, while

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discussing 'different subjects' - subjects which were, presumably, also connected with matters which were not political. They tell us of banquets and fireworks at Halland. They introduce the club at Woods Corner - presumably held at *The Swan* - where local parsons gathered and where the conversation was not always about politics but also about 'hops and country business.' They take us to country fairs at Selmeston and Robertsbridge and Rushlake, which provided the clergy with further opportunities for socialising with the gentry and yeomanry - parishioners in the upper echelons of local society - but, under the hothouse conditions of an election, when bonuses from an influential patron may have secured the limited allegiance of freeholders, they may give a false impression of *bonhomie* between parson and parishioners. (61) However, since they are the only pieces of evidence in existence which in any way portray the social life of the Cuckmere clergy, there is a danger that these gentlemen may be regarded as having been totally orientated towards politics. There is no doubt that advancement could be procured by playing the Pelhams' game and that it was almost essential for an ambitious cleric, living in the Cuckmere Valley between 1730 and 1760, to obtain the patronage of the Duke of Newcastle, although marriage to a Bishop's daughter was also a help. The Duke's control of ecclesiastical preferment at this period was unique and his residence so near the Cuckmere, where he clearly regarded all clergy as possible canvassers for his

political interest, may render clerical behaviour in this area atypical. The clergy were, in fact, in an anomalous position. Relying, as many of them did, on patronage, they were bound to be subservient, yet many Cuckmere clergy belonged to gentry families and were property owners in their own right and this set them apart from the majority of their parishioners.

Figure 7

Bishop Bowers' Visitation 1724 - Information re: Incumbents

Parish	Alfriston	Arlington	Berwick	Chiddingly	Heathfield	Hellingly	Litlington	Lullington	Seaford	Waldron	Warbleton	West Dean
Question												
(1) Rectory or Vicarage	Vicarage	Vicarage	Rectory	Vicarage	Vicarage	Vicarage	Rectory	Vicarage	Vicarage	Rectory	Rectory	Rectory
(2) Patron	Lord Chancellor	Preb. of Woodhorne	Rev. John Hawes	Duke of Dorset	Preb. of Heathfield Dr. Hayley	Duke of Newcastle	Mr. Humphrey South. Lord of the Manor	Bishop of Chichester	Preb. of Sutton	Duke of Dorset	Trustees of Smith's Charity	William Dobell Esq.
(3) Incumbent	Walter Bartelotte A.M. Oxon 1715	Samuel Isaac A.M. Cantab 1719	John Hawes A.M. Cantab 1694	Gyles * Watkins seq. Oxon	George Jordan Oxon 1717	William Masters A.B. Cantab 1717	Jonathan Darby A.M. Oxon 1701	William Edwards A.B. Seq.	Thomas Knight A.M. Cantab 1707	Richard Lidgold Oxon 1707	Roger Callow A.B. Cantab 1700	William Edwards A.B. Cantab 1692
(10) Value**	£ 11 16 6	£10 0 0	£13 6 8	£6 4 0	£10 0 0	£6 16 8	£12 13 0	£6 12 0	£11 15 0	£13 14 7	£13 6 8	£12 0 0
(11) Services held	1 Divine Service & Sermon by Vicar	1 D.S. & Ser by Vicar	1 D.S. & Ser by Rector	D.S. & Ser once	D.S. & Ser twice Except 2 shortest mths Nicholas Charrington M.A. Cantab, curate.	D.S. & Ser once Incumbent	D.S. & Ser once	D.S. & Ser once a month	D.S. & Ser once by Vicar	D.S. & Ser twice Incumbent	D.S. & Ser twice	D.S. & Ser Every Lord's Day
(12) Communion	4 x a year	4 x a year	3 x a year	4 x a year	4 x a year	4 x a year	3 x a year	None	4 x a year	4 x a year	4 x a year	4 x a year
(13) Glebe	11 acres part down, part arable part pasture	3a 1r all plain	28a partly arable, part meadow, 2 bullock leases on the common 1 on the cot-ling	5a plain land	20a plain 2a woodland	Half a rood Plain land	c 4a	No glebe	No glebe	38a all plain	32a all plain	7a glebe in the laine belonging to the manor house

* Gyles Watkins was a graduate of Oxford, having obtained his B.A. at Wadham College.

* Although the questionnaire specified that the value of the living 'in the King's Books' and the 'reall value' should both be given, in all cases only the value in the King's Books was given i.e. for taxation purposes.

Question (9) 'If anything hath been given to the augmentation of the living etc?' received a negative answer in all parishes.

WSRO Ep II 18/2

CHAPTER V - REFERENCES - THE ANGLICAN CLERGY I

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- 10) J. Ferguson, *The Religious Revival in England*, Open University Course Unit A.202/31 & 32, (1972) 9.
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- 12) W. Scawen Blunt, 'Extract from Mr. John Baker's Horsham Diary, c. 1771.' SAC LII (1909) 38ff.
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- 15) Quoted in J.H. Pruett, *The Parish Clergy under the Later Stuarts - The Leicestershire Experience*, (University of Illinois 1978) 2.
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- 24) N. Caplan, 'Visitation of the Diocese of Chichester in 1724', SNQ Vol XV No.9, (1962) 292.
- 25) ESRO W/A 52/473.
- 26) ESRO PAR 499/1/1/3.
- 27) Ferguson 9.
- 28) Bird 230.
- 29) B.L. Add Mss 6344 Col.681.
- 30) DNB 420; M.A. Lower, *Worthies of Sussex*, (1865) 269.
- 31) R.W. Blencowe & M.A. Lower, 'Extracts from the Diary of a Sussex Tradesman a Hundred Years Ago,' SAC XI (1859) 195, 203.

- 32) Ed. G. Jennings, *Thomas Turner: The Diary of a Georgian Shopkeeper* (1979) 10.
- 33) Venn & Venn Pt.I Vol.II. 306; B.L. Add Mss 32688.
- 34) Fruett 123.
- 35) ESRO W/A50/10.
- 36) ESRO PAR 499/1/1/3.
- 37) ESRO W/A47/139.
- 38) Venn & Venn Pt, I Vol. IV 202.
- 39) Fletcher 72.
- 40) WSRO EpII/18/2; Sussex Clergy List SAS Library; Cooper 227.
- 41) B.L. Add Mss 39349 f22.
- 42) E.H.W. Dunkin, 'A Calendar of the Deeds and other Documents in the Possession of the Sussex Archaeological Society,' SAC 37 (1890) 39.
- 43) Venn & Venn Pt.I Vol.I 190; Clergy List SAS.
- 44) B. Williams, *The Whig Supremacy*, (1962) 77.
- 45) B.L. Add Mss 32589 passim.
- 46) " " " 32589 f 15.
- 47) " " " 32588 f 401.
- 48) ESRO PAR 375/1/1/1.
- 49) B.L. Add Mss 33058 f 449.
- 50) " " " 32688.
- 51) P. Lucas, *Heathfield Memorials*, (1907) 29. There is some doubt as to whether Jordan married Bowers' daughter, or his sister. Lucas states it was his daughter, while Dunkin suggested that it was his sister. The will of Mrs. Ann Hawsworth of Warbleton (PRO PROB 11 683/108) indicates that Lucas was correct. In the will, made in 1732 when the Bishop had been dead for eight years, Mrs. Hawsworth made a bequest to her kinsman Thomas Bowers and his sister, wife of George Jordan, who must have been the Bishop's children.
- 52) WSRO EpII/4/40; EpII 25/1 f57; Lucas 29.
- 53) B.L. Add Mss 32688 f 19.
- 54) " " " 33058 f 74; 1734 Poll Book.
- 55) " " " 32588 f 357.
- 56) " " " 32688 f 183.
- 57) " " " 32588 f 621.
- 58) Lucas 122.
- 59) Jennings 40.
- 60) Foster 1686; Sussex Clergy List SAS.
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CHAPTER VI

THE ANGLICAN CLERGY - II

Status and Kinship

It is noticeable that in the period immediately following the Restoration, several Cuckmere parsons belonged to gentry families and were sometimes landowners possessing property apart from their glebelands. In the 1662 Hearth Tax assessments, for instance, John Hillman, Vicar of Arlington (1661-1667) was described as 'gentleman' rather than as 'clerk'.(1) Thomas West, Hillman's successor at Arlington, was the son of Thomas West of London, gentleman.(2) The incumbent at West Dean in 1662, Tobias Gyles, was almost certainly the son of Tobias Gyles, gentleman, of Alfriston, whose family had owned Deane Place and other land in that parish for a considerable period.(3)

Those who were landowners in their own right included John Tattersall, Rector of Waldron 1671-1707. On his death he owned a house and land in Lewes and three separate pieces of recently-purchased land in Waldron, from which he had been making a very small profit by selling iron-mining rights to the Pelhams.(4) William Nowell, Rector of Berwick 1673-1694, possessed land in his parish and the advowson, as well as land in Eastbourne and Arlington.(5) His predecessor at Berwick, Augustin Metcalfe 1669-1673, had owned the advowson and right of patronage of the Vicarage of Walthamstow in Essex.(6) Richard Weller, parson of Warbleton, who died in 1683 owning land at Cowlidge in Suffolk, had been granted armorial bearings while he had

been living at Rolvenden in Kent. His family had long been connected with the wealden iron industry. (7) Ezechieel Charke, grandson of Richard 'Judicious' Hooker, who was Rector of Waldron 1654-1670, owned land in Heathfield. (8) These examples justify the conclusion that even in the seventeenth century the Cuckmere clergy were frequently landowners or members of gentry families. It is noticeable that the latter men had been attracted to livings where the rectory had not been alienated to a lay impropiator. A rectory usually offered a greater chance of financial security than a vicarage and would, therefore, have had a particular appeal for gentry families, especially those seeking to establish younger sons in a calling considered suitable to their birth. Gentrification of the clergy was a fact in the Cuckmere valley before the beginning of the eighteenth century.

These men were not necessarily members of long established gentry families. Those who were not would probably have guarded their status with great zeal, so that establishment in a rectory would have represented a satisfactory goal. One family, which seemed all set to establish a clerical hierarchy, was the Hawes family of Berwick. John Hawes, Rector of Berwick from 1695-1743, who was succeeded by his son John (1743-50) and later by a grandson William (1768-1784) was the younger son of Edward Hawes, gentleman of Salehurst, whose forebears had been stewards to the Sidney family and later lessees of the

ironworks at Robertsbridge.(9) There was, in fact, a series of convoluted relationships linking many Cuckmere parsons with those who had made their fortunes in the iron industry.(Fig 8)

Families which had prospered because of the wealden iron industry during the Tudor period had formed a new elite which was somewhat rootless, since its members sought opportunities in any parish where the trade flourished. They did, however, tend to intermarry and form lasting friendships with each other.(10) With the decline of the industry the heirs of the more provident among that elite, now styled 'gentlemen', still maintained their old connections. They often favoured the church when choosing a profession for their sons, and clerics like the Wellers and the Hawes seem, quite naturally, to have settled in Cuckmere parishes which had links with the iron trade.

It has already been shown that by the eighteenth century clerical success in the area owed a great deal to patronage, yet not all the Cuckmere parsons relied on a patron for advancement. Some owed a great deal to their own family position. Gregory Sharpe Ll.B., inducted to West Dean and also to Folkington in February 1739, was the son of John Sharpe, solicitor to the Treasury. After ceding West Dean and Folkington in 1744 he held many other preferments and at his death in 1771 was Prebendary of Sarum, Vicar of Purton, Wilts; Master of the Temple and Chaplain to George III.(11) Walter Bartelotte, Domestic Chaplain to Richard, Lord Cobham, and Vicar of Alfriston and

also of Selmeston (1715-1732) was the heir to a large estate at Stopham, where his family had been lords of the manor since the fourteenth century. Bartelotte, whose maternal grandfather had been a Doctor of Divinity, moved to Rottingdean in 1732 and later became a Canon and Prebendary of Chichester.(12)

Others owed their prosperity to their own wits, as well as to their birth. Henry Harcourt, Rector of Warbleton 1761-1800, had suffered a minor set back as a younger son - his elder brother had been sent to Eton, while he had attended a private school in Luton. Later, he was awarded a scholarship at Peterhouse, Cambridge. In Warbleton, however, he managed to compensate for his earlier deprivation. In 1770 he married Martha Baker, nee Roberts, locally regarded as the Lady of the Manor, who was thirteen years his senior. Martha, the daughter of Walter Roberts, was a considerable heiress in her own right, and also a rich widow, though she forfeited some of the property inherited from her first husband, Michael Baker of Mayfield, on her re-marriage.(13) Warbleton was the richest living in the Cuckmere Valley, and the Rectory had been enlarged in the 1730s, but improvement was an eighteenth century pastime for the gentry and Harcourt and his wife added an imposing wing to the commodious mansion which she had inherited from her father at Rushlake Green, in Warbleton parish, two miles away from the church.(14)

Harcourt had earlier managed to augment his own

personal income when he had been appointed to the Rectory of Crowhurst in 1764.(15) Naturally, he took over the management of his wife's property, though his talents do not appear to have included book-keeping, as he kept the accounts of her rents in the same ledger as his own tithes.(16) He was also very careless about keeping the parish register. Its appearance, during his incumbency, can best be described as chaotic.(17) However, he had some assistance in running his wife's estate. When he wished to discuss affairs relating to it, he communicated with local landowners through his agent Richard Love, even if they were near neighbours and themselves of gentry stock. In May 1778 Thomas Lade, the owner of Priory Farm - one of the largest in the parish - received the following summons:-

'Sir, Mr. Harcourt will be glad if you can meet him and Mr. Philcox at Stonehouse on Saturday morning next at Ten O'Clock to set out the Road accross the Toll field. Signed Richard Love.

Stonehouse, 12th May 1778.'(18)

The summons concerned a right of way to the Priory across the Stonehouse land owned by Harcourt's wife. It was a rather peremptory but business-like communication, which seems out of character and suggests that the Rev. Mr. Harcourt, if not actually lacking in love and charity towards his neighbour, was rather conscious of his acquired position as local squire.

Henry Harcourt was a cousin of Lord Harcourt, to whom he was also domestic chaplain.(19) He chose his bride from an old gentry family, the Robertses of Boarzell in

Ticehurst and of Warbleton, which had also had profitable connections with the iron industry.(20) He had evidently been at some pains to publicise his own noble connections, for a painting was commissioned, which still hangs in the Stonehouse. This painting is partly landscape and partly armorial. It depicts, in the background, a castle in a parkland setting. In the left foreground are two pheasants, while practically the whole of the right hand side of the canvas is devoted to the heraldic shield of the Harcourts, which bears a small escutcheon of the Roberts family. The shield is surmounted by a coronet, in the centre of which stands a peacock with a flowing tail.(21)

The Warbleton parish registers show that several clerics were employed as curate during the early years of Harcourt's incumbency, before his marriage.(22) It is evident that, at this period, he neglected his clerical duties in Warbleton, where he was resident, although the terms of his dispensation to hold two livings, granted by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1764, exhorted him to preach thirteen sermons every year in each of the two parishes, and to provide hospitality in Crowhurst, where he was most absent, for at least two months of the year and to support and relieve the inhabitants, especially the poor and needy.(23) It is noticeable, however, that after his marriage he officiated frequently at weddings in Warbleton and his wife must have been a good influence, for after her death in 1796, he neglected this office again. By this time he was an elderly man who chose to spend the remaining four

years of his life in some grandeur and isolation on his wife's inheritance and his own income.

Other Cuckmere parsons did not always seek their marriage partners in the vicinity of the valley, but the diagram of their kinship patterns shows that a remarkably close knit relationship existed among them, which often extended to their gentry neighbours; and that, in many cases, there was also a connection which had already been established through the wealden iron industry. (Fig 8) At the centre of this fraternity was a non-clerical gentleman, born of clerical stock, called Edward Hawksworth, who lived in Warbleton. He was the son of Joseph Hawksworth, Vicar of Burwash (1641-1662) and his second wife Jane. (24) Jane Hawksworth later married Richard Weller, Rector of Warbleton (c1650-1653). Edward Hawksworth was an overseer of his stepfather's will. For performing this duty he was bequeathed £3. Another overseer of the rector's will was William Wilkin, son of the Vicar of Heathfield, described as Richard Weller's nephew, who also received £3 for his pains, while the younger Wilkin's sister Elizabeth, together with five other relatives, was left a gold ring worth ten shillings. (25)

Edward Hawksworth died young, but his wife Ann, who was related to the Roberts family, became a very wealthy woman and the hub of the fraternity. She died childless in 1737. Among the beneficiaries of her will, which had been made some years before her death, were numbered several Cuckmere

clergy or their close relatives, who were her kinsmen. They included Mrs. Sarah Wilkin, daughter of William Wilkin, a Vicar of Heathfield; Thomas Bowers, son of the former Bishop of Chichester (1722-24); also his sister Ann, wife of Chancellor George Jordan of Burwash, a former Vicar of Heathfield. Mrs. Hawsworth's sole executor and residuary legatee was Edward Hawes of Warbleton, son of her 'cousin' John Hawes, Rector of Berwick, 1695-1743. Several other clergy not living in the area of the Cuckmere were also mentioned in the will. (26) The relationships of this coterie were vast and have not yet been fully explored, though sufficient branches have been traced to establish the validity of the claim that clergy in the Cuckmere parishes were often members of a linked elite. Among the wealden parishes Waldron was outstanding in not having been drawn into this inner circle, which also extended to some of the downland parishes - the two remotest from the weald, West Dean and Seaford being the exceptions among these.

Friendship and Socialising

Friendship patterns among the clergy can also be traced, though with greater difficulty, since evidence cannot be found in parish registers and is drawn mainly from wills, and even this is sparse. It has already been shown that political allegiance was an important facet in the career structure of many Cuckmere clergy. It may also have influenced their friendships. Edward Hawes, who inherited Mrs. Hawsworth's estate at Markly in Warbleton, was later bequeathed a ring dedicated to 'my good old

acquaintance' by the tory Vicar of Heathfield, William Preston, 1731-1771. (27) Preston, was godfather of Kitty Barton, daughter of Thomas Barton, the Rector of Warbleton 1732-1761, who had been unmoved by the advances made by Newcastle's agent. Another of Barton's children, Henry, was sponsored by a kinsman of Richard Weller, one of his predecessors at Warbleton Rectory. In his turn, Barton was the executor of the will of Richard Wilkin, the bookseller son of William Wilkin, who lived at Kingsley Hill in Warbleton. (28) In less exalted social circles, Nicholas Message, forgerman of Chiddingly, charged his 'well beloved friend', John Slader, clerk of Chiddingly, who must have been a curate, with the upbringing of his son. (29) Among the clergy in the lower valley, who depended on their peers for friendship was Robert Nurth, Vicar of Alfriston 1671-1709, a widower who left his entire estate to his 'loving friend', William Green, clerk and Vicar of Selmeston. (30)

There is a distinct lack of evidence concerning the relationship which existed between individual ministers and members of their congregations, especially in connection with parishes in the lower part of the valley. The Duke of Newcastle's election correspondence suggests that in some cases a tenuous *cameraderie* was established, but the lack of personal documentation, in the form of diaries or journals written by incumbents or their parishioners, creates a limbo which cannot be penetrated. There was, however, a witness from a neighbouring parish to Waldron - the

shopkeeper Thomas Turner - whose revelations concerning the social activities of an eighteenth century parson of East Hoathly, frequently bordered on the scandalous. Of one typical nocturnal revel spent with his friends, Turner recorded, 'Our diversion was dancing or jumping about, without a violin or any musick, singing of foolish healths and drinking all the time as fast as it could be well poured down; and the parson of the parish was one among the mixed multitude.' At three o'clock in the morning, Turner, 'very far from sober', decided that he had had enough, abandoned his wife (who was brought home two hours later by a servant) and left the party. He managed to reach home 'without even tumbling'. Within an hour of his wife's return, a group of his friends followed and 'poured into my room; and, as modesty forbid me to get out of bed, so I refrained; but their immodesty permitted them to draw me out of bed, ... topsy-turvey; but, however, at the intercession of Mr. Porter (the parson), they permitted me to ... put on my wife's petticoats; and in this manner they made me dance, without shoes and stockings, untill they had emptied the bottle of wine.' Turner, who was, in spite of indications to the contrary, a young man of high moral principles, much given to reading Tillotson's sermons, ended the account with this observation, 'the precepts delivered from the pulpit on Sunday, tho' delivered with the greatest ardour, must lose a great deal of their efficacy by such examples.' (31)

Unfortunately, his revelations have done little to promote a favourable image of the eighteenth century clergy. They

appear to have been made in order to purge Turner's own conscience, and for this reason have a distinct bias against any ribald behaviour in which he was a participant. Other inhabitants of the village, less given to soul searching, may have found such rowdy, but fairly harmless, escapades quite unremarkable.

The excessive consumption of wine and spirits was a normal activity in the eighteenth century, especially in company, but its results tended to lead to objectionable behaviour and this was frequently recorded, especially when the subject was a parson. For instance, John Graveit, Rector of Litlington (1664-1676) was indicted at Quarter Sessions in August 1664, for being a common drunkard, although the circumstances surrounding this lapse are a mystery, for no record of Graveit's trial could be found in the Sessions Roll or Order Book, and, in fact, he was not formally inducted into the living of Litlington until two weeks after the date of his indictment.(32) Another bout of over indulgence on the part of an individual Cuckmere clergyman sheds a glimmer of light on parish relationships. This occurred in Alfriston, where the Vicar, Robert Nurth, probably because of his lonely existence, (his wife had died some years previously and he had not re-married), seems to have had a tendency to drink too much. This caused trouble with his parishioners, who reported him to the ecclesiastical authorities. At a church court held in November 1691, Nurth acknowledged that, 'he was guilty of

some excess in drinking ... at his house in Alfriston and that at the same time he was in a passion and heat with several of his parishioners and did ... abuse some of them in words.' He was warned by the judge to live piously and soberly in the future, and the inference is that Nurth was not on particularly good terms with his neighbours. (33)

In the *Book of Sufferings* kept by the Society of Friends are several passages which illustrate the ways in which persecutors of the Quakers were visited by divine retribution. One such passage concerns Roger Callow, Rector of Warbleton 1699-1732, who on many occasions adopted desperate means to recover his tithes from Quaker families who lived in the parish. It relates how Callow had beaten a servant so severely that she was only saved from death by several doctors, though she was not 'restored to her former soundness of body, nor ever will be'. Callow had refused to pay the girl compensation, whereupon she had sued him. At his trial he was fined £40 and costs. (34)

Sadly, it was often true that only bad or deviant behaviour was recorded. However, two reported cases of inebriation among ninety parsons in one hundred and twenty years hardly amounted to a torrent of wickedness. Statistically, the evidence proclaims an excess of sobriety, rather than the reverse. Similarly, a deposition against one parson, by witnesses who were, not only biased, but whose religion enjoined them to despise the clergy, does not prove that all ministers ill-treated their servants. The sparse evidence that remains concerning social relationships

between the clergy and their parishioners does not, on the face of it, present too happy a picture, except where a natural bond existed, but the figures cannot be used to suggest that general depravity or excessive drunkenness was the norm among Cuckmere clerics.

Clerical Income

Relationships between clergy and parishioners were largely dependent upon class and upbringing, but even though the clergy might be set apart from the majority of their parishioners by reason of their superior education (if not by reason of their birth), not all of them possessed the financial assets to maintain gentry status. The incumbent of any parish obtained his income from several sources. A parsonage normally possessed an area of glebe - land devoted to its upkeep - the amount varied considerably in size and, in the Cuckmere, was particularly small in downland parishes. Apart from the glebe, the parson might have a private income, and several Cuckmere ministers did, though again this varied greatly in amount. The parson also received fees for his services, which were largely dependent on the number of people in the parish requiring them. An eighteenth-century Waldron rector's list of fees paid seems to have been standard. These varied from one shilling charged for giving a certificate that banns had been published or for searching the register, to five shillings for performing a marriage by banns. Burial in the churchyard cost two shillings for a parish inhabitant, but

6
six shillings and eightpence for a stranger, plus two shillings for reading the service. Burial inside the church was a more costly affair, when ten shillings was charged for breaking up the ground, and some of this must have been claimed by the sexton. A funeral sermon cost half a guinea, but if a specially chosen text was required, then the fee was doubled. (35)

7
The greatest part of the parson's income normally came from his tithes. In a living where the great tithes had been sequestered, the vicar had already lost a valuable annual payment. This was particularly disastrous in a downland parish, where the great tithes, normally those of corn and hay, often included those of wool as well, since these three commodities represented practically the entire agricultural output of the parish. The Rector of Litlington, for instance, had lost some of the rectorial tithes to the Dean and Chapter of Chichester, and this caused some of the incumbents of that parish acute financial embarrassment. (36)

1
The amount that a parson derived from his tithes depended on the size of his parish and the fertility of the soil, and also upon the extent of natural disasters like drought, or flood, or extreme heat and cold, animal diseases and crop blights. (These latter considerations would also have affected the amount of produce obtainable from the glebe.) Because of this there were considerable variations in the income derived from tithes. Hops, which were grown in the wealden parishes, received a double tithe payment.

3

Though there is some evidence from Heathfield, that in the early years of the eighteenth century, the amount of hops produced decreased greatly, and this may have been due to a local resistance to the extra payment demanded. In the Weald, too, wood was normally tithe free, but Thomas Lord, Rector of Warbleton (1605-1640) had managed, after a battle in the episcopal court, to establish a right to tithes on woodland and this right continued, although unpopular with parishioners. (37)

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Glebe Terriers often provide a list of assets with which each living was endowed. For the Cuckmere parishes, these were made at three dates during the seventeenth century; in 1616, 1635 and 1675, and a copy for at least one of these dates is extant for each of the Cuckmere parishes, though Warbleton is alone in having a complete set. (38)

1

The terriers vary enormously in content, and in one or two cases the documents are torn. Usually, as well as some comment on the house and barn, a specification of the glebe lands is given. The returns to the 1724 Visitation also list the amount of glebe in each parish, and a comparison between the seventeenth century terriers and the eighteenth century visitation returns, often shows that some land was lost. (39) For instance the 1635 terrier of Alfriston suggests that the glebe amounted to over twenty-four acres, which included an acre near the coast at Chinting in Seaford. (40) By 1724 there were only eleven and a half acres. (41) At Heathfield the glebe measured twenty five

acres in 1616; twenty acres in 1635; but twenty two acres in 1714.(42). It was still twenty two acres in 1843.(43) It is possible that these variations may have been due to faulty surveying methods, or to the fact that measurements varied from statute acres to tenantry acres. The amount of glebe in each parish, at various dates, is shown on Figure 9.

In the Cuckmere Valley the three most northerly parishes, Warbleton, Waldron and Heathfield were good livings. Warbleton and Waldron were both rectories, where the incumbents received both great and small tithes - although the produce on which tithe could be claimed varied from parish to parish. Their glebe was also fairly substantial, amounting to thirty eight acres at Waldron and thirty two acres at Warbleton in 1724, though the seventeenth century glebe terriers state that in Warbleton the glebe had amounted to forty acres in 1616 and 1635 and to thirty three acres in 1675.(44) In 1635 the rectory at Waldron also possessed, as well as the parsonage house and barn, with stable and stall at each end, 'a smithy and shop belonging thereto'.(45) The vicar at Heathfield had been granted the tithe of hay, normally one of the great tithes, as well as the small tithes at a very early date.(46) The comparative wealth of these three northerly livings was reflected in the lack of movement by incumbents in and out of the parishes. Once appointed, they stayed. During the years 1660-1780 Warbleton had only five rectors, while Waldron had six. Heathfield had six vicars. In the

Downland parishes movement was much greater. Seaford - the parish without any glebe or a vicarage - topped the list with twelve vicars in one hundred and twenty years.

Alfriston, where the glebe amounted to eleven and a half acres, had eight vicars. Litlington (which will be discussed in the following chapter) had seven rectors while West Dean, which possessed seven acres of glebe, had nine. Parishes in the Low Weald - all vicarages - also had a high rate of turnover. Hellingly (half a rood of glebe) had ten vicars; while Arlington and Chiddingly (glebe 3 acres and 5 acres respectively) had nine each. The rectory of Berwick with twenty acres of glebe, where the incumbents (seven of them during the period 1660-1780) generally held the advowson saw fewer changes.

There is very little evidence to show whether the Cuckmere clergy farmed their own glebe, or whether they leased it. Parson Nutt had certainly farmed at Berwick in the years before the civil war, but whether his successors after 1660 did so is not always clear. John Hawes I made some additions to Parson Nutt's *Remembrances*, which show that he had an interest in the allocation of the bullock leases on Berwick Common and privileges on the Tye, and the inference is that he was farming himself.(47) Elsewhere, there is only negative evidence; at Warbleton Henry Harcourt was leasing the glebe in 1780, and at Heathfield in 1709 the rectorial glebe, belonging to the Prebendal manor was also leased.(48) In Leicestershire, Pruett found that most late

Stuart clergy farmed their own glebe.(49)

If the Cuckmere clergy were leasing their glebe, the amount received for rent would, in most cases, have been very small. Over the period 1660-1780 rents generally show an increase, but these would have varied from Weald to Downland, and in the Weald the quality of the land would also have been important, as it could vary enormously within each parish. In Warbleton, rents varied from about eight shillings an acre in 1700, to nine shillings an acre in 1750, to ten shillings an acre in 1780. Henry Harcourt, with his thirty acres of glebe, could have expected a rent of £15 a year. By his failure to condescend 'to the knowledge of tillage and pasturage' he may also have forfeited an opportunity of improving his relationship with farmers and husbandman in his parish.(50)

Parson Nutt had always taken his tithe in kind and was anxious to preserve this right. In Warbleton, Tudor clergy had taken money for some tithes by the middle of the sixteenth century, and it appears that Richard Weller, the rector who signed a glebe terrier in 1675, regretted this move and may have forced a new agreement on his parishioners. Depositions dating from early in the seventeenth century contradict the wording of the terrier which reads, 'the tithes have for(merly?) been taken in kind and there is no custom to the contrary ...the tithes by composition amounts to one hundred pounds a yeare.'(51) In the mid-eighteenth century Thomas Barton received most of his tithes as money payments, although some were still

received in kind. Harcourt's Tithe Book shows that in 1779 all payments were received in cash and amounted to £211. 12s 5d.(52) A comparison with the assessment for 1675 shows that the value of tithes had more than doubled in a hundred years. There must have been a new agreement between rector and parishioners.

Since the tithe system caused antagonism between a parson and his flock, many of whom were frequently in arrears with their payments, it is not surprising that George Jordan, Vicar of Heathfield (1713-1731), who was later to become highly placed as an ecclesiastical dignitary, decided to organise his tithe receipts systematically. He kept a strict account of all the payments he received in the *Tythe Book of Heathfield*, which he began in 1716.(53) His parishioners were rated at one shilling in the pound, based on the yearly rental of their property - or, if the occupants were also the owners, on a valuation based on the estimated yearly rental. Hops were charged at five shillings an acre, but there is some evidence that his parishioners were either resistant to paying the extra charge due on hops and were not making honest returns, or they stopped growing hops in order to avoid the extra tithes. The entries in the *Tithe Book* show that during the period 1720-1730 many substantial farms were not growing hops at all, or grew them for a short period and they were then 'put down'.

Jordan's tithes were not always taken as a money

payment. For instance in 1719 he received, 'an hog and some money', for tithe on Sapperton farm and in 1717 he had received hay and faggots for the same property. In 1718 Sapperton provided a quarter of a hog and nine bushels of oats, while in 1719 the tithe was a third of a hog and a third of a load of straw. John Harmer, who used a house and garden and some ground called Quarry Brook, also paid his tithes in kind. In 1718 the Vicar received 'some apple trees for one year's tithe,' and in 1726 he was paid with 'stones drawn for my house for eight years' tithe.' This date coincides with the date at which new materials were being laid in for the repair of the vicarage house at Heathfield. (54)

Sometimes, the vicar was disposed to be lenient, as in the case of Widow Lavender, who had a farm called Harmers on the poor land which bordered the three parishes of Burwash, Heathfield and Warbleton, for which his predecessor, William Wilkin had taken one shilling yearly. Jordan wrote, 'the old woman was poor as well as old and therefore I took nothing of her but only once a bushel of apples by way of acknowledgement.' When her son John became tenant in 1723, Jordan decided, 'I must have tithes of the young man.' On other occasions the vicar had to acknowledge the impossibility of obtaining payment. Elias Coverett, 'was a fisherman and broke and I lost by him two years' tithe and a half'. Since Heathfield is about twenty miles from the sea, it is not surprising that Coverett was impecunious and could not pay the six shillings annual tithe due on the

little farm which he occupied.

In spite of Jordan's *Tithe Book*, it is not easy to assess the exact amount which he received in tithes, for not everyone paid on time, so that some years were particularly lean. On the other hand, there were occasions when parishioners three years in arrears paid a lump sum. If a few people did this at the same time, the income for that year would be extra large. An incumbent needed to be a fairly good accountant and organiser to cope with such a fluctuating source of income. At Michaelmas 1717, for instance, Jordan received £67 6s 7d, for the year. His successor, William Preston, received £88 13s 0d in 1736, although properties were still being rated on the same basis as formerly. This variation represents nearly twenty five per cent of the income from the Heathfield tithes. (55) In a small parish, where the income was smaller, so large a variation in the annual receipts might have proved disastrous.

These two Wealden parishes, Warbleton and Heathfield, are the only two parishes in the Cuckmere Valley for which it is possible to make any assessment of the parson's income. Both these livings were well endowed and their incumbents would have been among the more affluent clergy in the district. At the end of the seventeenth century, Lord Ashburnham stated that Anthony Nethercott, Rector of Warbleton (and Vicar of Ashburnham) was 'very rich' and that he had 'laid by for himself and family at least fifteen

hundred pounds in money'. It must be remembered that Lord Ashburnham had an axe to grind and he was suggesting to the Bishop that Nethercott could afford to pay a curate at Ashburnham more than twenty-six pounds a year. (56)

Others were not so fortunate. In 1779 tithe paid to Henry Harcourt, the Rector of Warbleton, had amounted to over two hundred pounds. The value of Warbleton Tithe rent charge in 1838 came to £939. (57) This suggests that the Rector of West Dean, where the tithe rent charge in 1842 amounted to only £165 could have been receiving less than fifty pounds a year for his tithes in the eighteenth century. Fifty pounds a year was the amount which represented the clerical poverty line, established in 1704 by the Commissioners of Queen Anne's Bounty, who attempted to raise the value of all livings. (58) Other Cuckmere parishes where the living provided little more than that of West Dean were Alfriston (£167 10s 3d in 1842), Arlington (£215 in 1843), Litlington (£220 in 1845) and Seaford (£240 in 1839.) (59) All these were Downland parishes, with the exception of Arlington, which was part Downland and part Low Weald. The incumbents of these parishes would all have found difficulty in making ends meet, and it is hardly surprising that the majority of them were pluralists.

Pluralism and Absenteeism

During the years 1660-1780 in eleven Cuckmere parishes (Lullington has been omitted because there was frequently no minister) there were altogether eighty-eight incumbents. (60) Of these at least thirty one were pluralists. Many of the

most notorious have already been introduced in this and the previous chapter, but an analysis of pluralism by parish shows that it was in the downland parishes, so poorly endowed, that pluralism was most evident. Here it was a necessity rather than a crime. After 1690 all the rectors of West Dean were also holding another living - often Folkington. Every vicar of Alfriston, except Robert Nurth was a pluralist and even Nurth acted as minister at Litlington for a time. At Arlington, it was not until the eighteenth century that the ministers began to hold more than one living - but having joined the ranks of pluralists they not only held two livings at once, but were all domestic chaplains to important people. John Wright (1709-1719) was Vicar of Pevensey and domestic chaplain to the Bishop of Chichester. Samuel Isaac (1719-1738) was Vicar of Wilmington and domestic chaplain to the Prince of Wales. William Bean (1738-1768) was Vicar of Willingdon and chaplain to Spencer, Earl of Wilmington, the speaker of the House of Commons; and Edward Clarke, (1768-1786) was Vicar of Willingdon, Rector of Buxted and had been chaplain to the Duke of Newcastle. Arlington may have been a poor living, but it attracted some high powered incumbents. It is a pity that they were probably all absentees, although Samuel Isaac and William Bean did sign the registers from time to time.

Pluralism was not confined solely to the poorly endowed parishes. After 1669 all the Rectors of Berwick,

were either Vicars of Alciston or held a prebendal stall at Chichester. Most vicars of Heathfield after 1699 held more than one living. At Warbleton, Anthony Nethercott (1683-1699) was Vicar of Ashburnham and also a Canon of Chichester and Henry Harcourt was also Rector of Crowhurst. The Waldron rectors were not pluralists until after 1729, when Dr. James Hargreaves, the staunch supporter of the Duke of Newcastle, became rector - his many preferments have already been cited. After Hargreaves it was downhill all the way in Waldron, for the next two rectors held parishes some distance away and were almost certainly absentees. Chiddingly was the only parish in the Cuckmere which did not have an incumbent who held another living - at least not until 1781, when Thomas Baker, Vicar since 1777, was also appointed to Alciston. The unblemished record of Chiddingly vicars is hard to explain. The living was not a rich one, though it was slightly more remunerative than those in the Downland parishes. None of the Chiddingly vicars seems to have been particularly distinguished, but Chiddingly's position near Halland, which probably accounted for the wealthy carriage folk in its congregation during the eighteenth century, may have been beneficial to its incumbents. (61) It is fairly obvious that pluralism increased during the eighteenth century and since pluralism must foster absenteeism, this obviously increased also. Many of the Downland livings which were held in plurality were twinned with a neighbouring parish, and although ministers may have been absent they were often occasional

visitors. An attempt to prove the residence of incumbents by studying parish registers was not conclusive, though in some instances it was possible to establish residence, when a parson with distinctive handwriting kept and signed the registers. However, many ministers did not trouble to sign the registers at all, while others signed once yearly on what was obviously an annual visit. In his autobiography Edward Ellman, a nineteenth century Rector of Berwick, wrote that in the early years of that century Lewes was known as 'the Rookery', because of the large number of reverend gentlemen in large black hats and sombre suits, who emerged from the town on Sunday mornings to take services in their nearby parishes. (62) It is possible that this was also the case in the eighteenth century, and that some incumbents who held services regularly, were not actually resident, although there had been an improvement since the early sixteenth century, when it had been rare for a graduate or well-connected priest to live in his parish. (63) The eighteenth century clergy were certainly not without blemish, but many criticisms levelled against them are based on evidence which records a single event and is used to prove a general point. Although a few of them drank too much on occasion, the Cuckmere clergy taken as a whole cannot be called debauched. Those who were wealthy suffered from fluctuating income levels, but many were poor, especially in the Downland parishes, where their poverty made pluralism a necessity. Pluralism did spread to the

Weald, where the necessity was probably social rather than financial. There was a considerable difference in income between parsons living in Downland parishes and those living in the Weald, where parishes were larger, living standards were higher and where the clergy tended to remain in their livings for longer periods. The gathering of tithes, which made up part of their income, caused friction with parishioners. The Cuckmere parsons were mainly drawn from gentry families, and in most parishes they were linked by family ties. Patronage and politics were important to them and although there is little evidence that they farmed or 'tally-hoed' with the squires, they probably did 'guzzle' with them and certainly mixed and inter-married with them, since they were their social peers. There is also more than a suggestion that when they were resident (and often they were not), they were true to their gentry status and held themselves aloof from the majority of their parishioners.

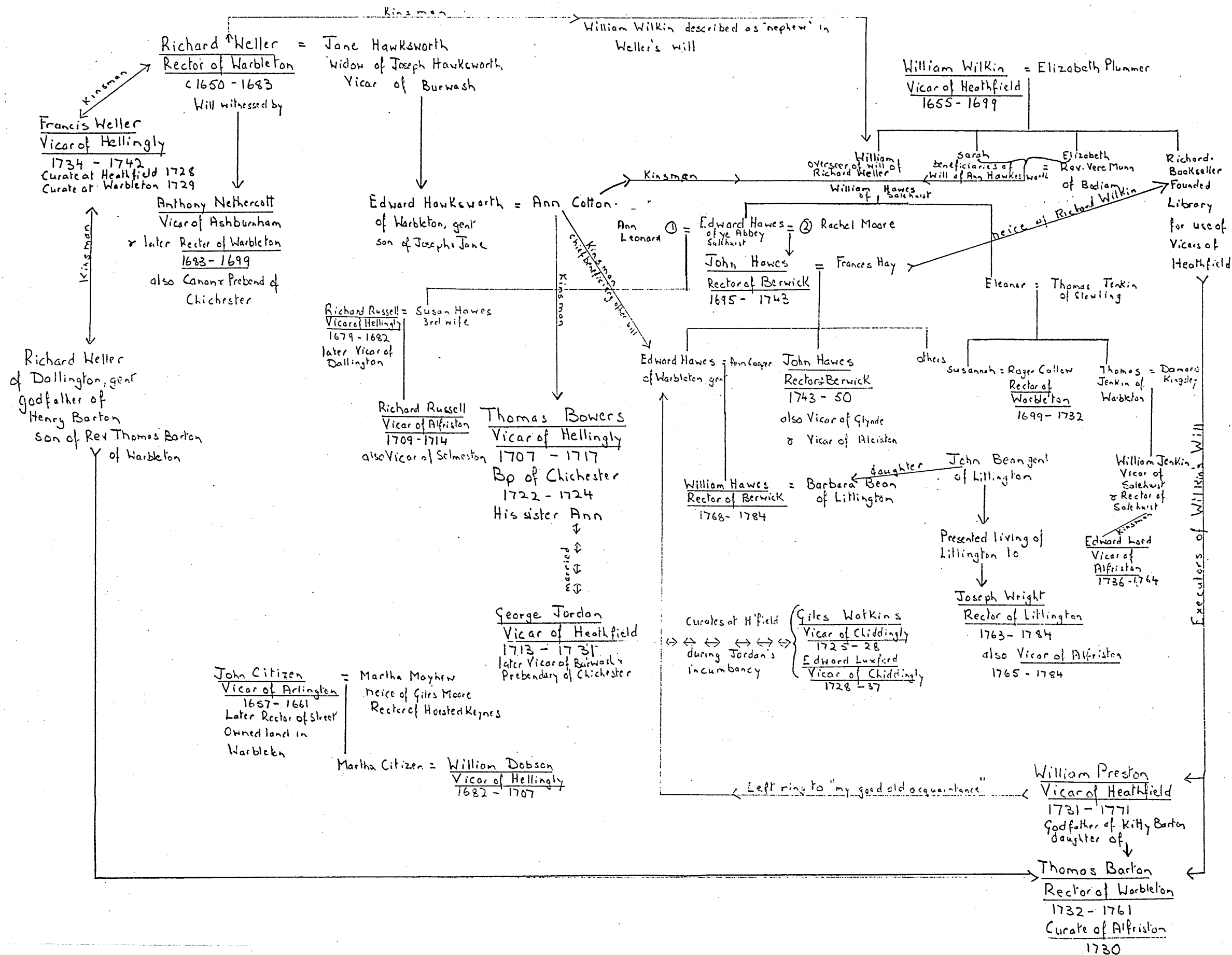


Figure 8
 KINSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP
 PATTERNS AMONG CUCKMERE
 CLERGY BETWEEN 1660-1780

Fig 9.

PARSONAGE GLEBE IN THE CUCKMERE VALLEY

Rectorial Glebe (R) is shown for parishes where the incumbent was normally the Rector and Vicarial Glebe (V) is shown for parishes where the Rectorial Glebe had been impropriated.

Date:	1635	1675	1724	19thC*
Parish				
Alfriston (V)	24a 2r	--	11a 2r	9a 1r 23p
Arlington (V)	3a 2r	--	3a 1r	5a 2r 22p
Berwick (R)	33a 3r	33a 2r	31a	45a 0r 22p
Chiddingly (V)	5a 2r	--	5a	8a 3r
Heathfield (V)	20a	--	22a	22a 2r 2p
Hellingly (V)	1a 0r 20p	--	20 perches	10a 2r 13p
Litlington (R)	--	4a	4a	4a 2r 4p
Lullington (V)	1r +£8 p.a.		None	
Seaford (V)	2r	--	None	2a 2r 27p
Waldron (R)	36a	--	38a	40a
Warbleton (R)	40a	33a	32a	39a 2r 30p
West Dean (R)	--	--	7a	6a 2r 8p

*At time of Tithe Award c.1840

-- No returns, or return illegible.

CHAPTER VI - THE ANGLICAN CLERGY II - REFERENCES

- 1) Ed. M.J. Burchall, *Sussex Hearth Tax Assessments, Pevensey Rape*, (Brighton 1980) 61.
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- 3) Burchall 62; ESRO AMS 5764; ESRO PAR 230/1/1/1.
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CHAPTER VII

CLERGY HOUSES

Three Tumbled Houses

In 1675 Zachary Cawdrey argued that, 'the most comfortable and sweetest part of a Minister's revenue lay in his house and glebe.' (1) Cawdrey evidently had an idealistic conception of these assets. Some Cuckmere parsons at this period possessed houses which were far from comfortable; two parsons had no house at all; while those houses which were up to standard, both in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, often decreased rather than augmented clerical income, since it was the incumbent's responsibility to pay for renovations and repairs. In the early seventeenth century Parson Nutt rebuilt Berwick Rectory, which cost him over seven hundred pounds. (2) As for the glebe, it has been shown that in the Cuckmere Valley these lands, whether farmed by the incumbent or leased, normally provided only a small income. This was often insufficient to meet the cost of a substantial re-build.

The state of repair of clergy houses was obviously of concern both to the incumbents, who in many cases passed the greater part of their lives in one, and to the diocesan authorities, with whom lay the ultimate responsibility for their maintenance. The evidence for the years between 1660 and 1780 shows that many of these houses in the Cuckmere Valley were abandoned, or fell down or were the subject of substantial renovation. Unfortunately, the progress of

their decay, is not well documented in diocesan records and it is clear that episcopal supervision was lax. For instance, the returns of the 1686 Commission, which was set up to enquire into the repair of both churches and parsonage houses, mention only two parishes, Heathfield and Warbleton, where repairs were required to either house or barn, yet this is certainly not proof that the parsonage buildings in the other ten parishes were in good condition, for the 1724 Visitation shows that in Lullington, Arlington and Seaford parsonage houses had actually disappeared between 1635 and 1724. (3)

Seaford

At Seaford it is probable that this had taken place before 1686. In September 1635, the Vicar and other 'honest men' of the town of Seaford had declared in a Glebe Terrier that 'we have to our vicarage house a little barn and a backside of land whereon the house and barn standeth,' which suggests that the vicarage was still in existence. (4) A later terrier, made in 1675 declares, 'We present a certain plot of ground lying near the parish church of Seaford whereon stood formerly a Viccareedge house and barn...' (5) By 1724 even the small amount of glebe land - less than an acre - had also been lost to the vicar. (6) This state of affairs can only have encouraged pluralism and absenteeism.

Lullington

Another vicarage apparently disappeared in the lower valley at about the same time. This was at Lullington,

where the date at which the church itself was reduced to the size of a chapel is still a mystery. In 1520, the Vicar was assigned what had been the Rector's house, with a small garden adjacent to it on the west side of the church, but the rectory was appropriated to the Dean and Chapter of Chichester.(7) A glebe terrier of 1635 mentions the 'vicaredge house and a little plott of ground adjoining containing one rood of land or thereabout ...'(8) The returns to the 1724 Visitation stated that there was no house or glebe.(9) It may possibly have been reclaimed by the Dean and Chapter. A map of 1799, which was one of a series showing the Sussex holdings of the Sackvilles (Dukes of Dorset) plots the Parsonage Acre with a building on it (not claimed as part of the Duke's property) to the west of the church and adjoining what had once been the village street.(10) It appears that the house had not disappeared, but had become alienated from the vicarage.

Arlington

It was not the vicarage at Arlington, but the parsonage house which disappeared at some time between 1686, and 1724. Both vicarage and parsonage are shown on Edward Gyer's map of 1629. The map was commissioned by William Thomas of West Dean and Folkington, who was then lessee of the rectory manor. The parsonage, which was very near the river, was shown as a substantial three-bayed house with gables.(11) On 15th October 1633 it was recorded in the parish register, 'There was so great an overflowe of the

river - the like hath not been seene or heard of in the memory of man soe that the lower rooms in the Parsonage house were altogether under water...'(12) Another deluge in September 1671 (again recorded in the parish register) had also flooded the lower rooms of the parsonage house, this time to a depth of eighteen inches, and it is not difficult to guess why the house fell into disrepair, as reported by the churchwardens at Easter 1686.(13) It is strange, therefore, that no mention is made of this state of affairs by the 1686 Commission, especially since the 1724 returns reported that although the vicarage house was in good repair, 'the house belonging to the parsonage and standing since the memory of man has been suffered by neglect to be pulled down.'(14) No indication of the date at which this event took place has been found. The Parsonage may not have been inhabited at this time, since the rectory belonged to the Prebendary of Woodhorne, and the Manor of Woodhorne was leased. The lessee at this time, (who was styled lord of the Manor in the court rolls) was Samuel Howard, who does not appear to have been resident.(15)

Heathfield

In Heathfield, one of the two northerly parishes where the 1686 Commission had noted the necessity for repairs to parsonage property, the vicarage disappeared between 1635 and 1724. A terrier of 1635 describing the glebe lands belonging to the vicarage, confirms the existence of a mansion house and barn.(16) In 1686, it was reported that,

'the vicarage barn wants a little repairing, but promised to be done.' (17) No mention is made of the vicarage house, but in 1713, when George Jordan was appointed to Heathfield, it was apparently unfit for human habitation and shortly afterwards both the vicarage house and barn had fallen down. By 1724 there was, 'a new barn with a stable and stall built by the present incumbent and materials have been and are still laying in to rebuild the vicarage house.' (18) By 1726 building had not progressed any further, for the churchwardens presented, 'Wee have no vicarage house but some materialls laid in in order to build a new house.' (19) The reason for the delay was, presumably, because George Jordan, though continuing as vicar of Heathfield, had been appointed to the living of Burwash in 1717 and by 1721 had built a new vicarage in that parish, where he and his wife Ann, the daughter of Dr. Thomas Bowers, (soon to be Bishop of Chichester), had taken up residence. (20) It is not clear when the new vicarage at Heathfield was completed, but the house is shown on a map of the glebe, drawn by Thomas Weller in 1784, as a modest, two-storied, stuccoed residence, with two attic dormer windows and an imposing porch. The thatched barn can be seen in the background. (21)

Warbleton

In Warbleton a glebe terrier of 1675 had mentioned the Rectory, but its condition was not stated. (22) The 1686 commission had reported, 'Mr. Nethercott hath promised

to repair the parsonage house and barn.' (23) Anthony Nethercott, had been appointed as Rector of Warbleton in 1683, but had been Vicar of Ashburnham since 1668. Having been granted a dispensation to hold two livings, he continued to live at Ashburnham where the vicarage, although a small house, was described in 1671 as 'new and more than repayred'. (24) After 1695, when Lord Ashburnham appointed his own chaplain as minister at Ashburnham, Nethercott must have taken up residence in Warbleton and may have kept the promise made in 1686 to repair the parsonage there, though it seems unlikely in view of his reluctance to maintain Ashburnham vicarage during his thirty-year stay - Lord Ashburnham described the Ashburnham vicarage house and buildings in 1695 as 'dropping downe and not habitable with safety'. (25) Some renovations must have been carried out at Warbleton, either by Nethercott or his successor Richard Callow, for the mansion house was stated to be in good repair in 1724. (26) Yet by 1732, when Thomas Barton was inducted as Rector, the house was apparently in a state of decay, for Barton applied to the Bishop for a faculty to pull down and rebuild part of it. In April 1733, a commission consisting of the Rectors of Brightling, Etchingham and Herstmonceux together with the Vicars of Ashburnham, Heathfield, and Hellingly was summoned to examine the claim. Three of these men, William Burrell of Brightling, William Preston of Heathfield and William Masters of Hellingly visited the rectory, with some speed, and, having 'conferred with able workmen', found it to be in

a 'ruinous condition and very inconvenient for a family to live in.' The faculty was granted on the eleventh of May. The re-built rectory was to contain 'two parlours, a kitchen and a Hall with the other conveniences of a good size.' The work, paid for by Barton, was to be 'finished in a substantial manner.' (27)

Thomas Barton may have had ideas of grandeur in putting this work in hand, but it is also probable that his predecessor, Roger Callow had lived in some discomfort. It is thought that the Rectory at Warbleton was built at the very beginning of the fourteenth century. It had been an important and imposing building, superior in every way to a normal clergy house of the period, with workmanship and decoration of exceptionally high quality, which had been damaged by fire and partially rebuilt in the fifteenth century; there may have been some truth in the criticism that it was inconvenient. (28) Barton's improvements, however, were responsible for the destruction of the medieval hall, and the house acquired a new eighteenth-century look, in keeping with the standards required by the son of a gentleman. (29) Thomas Barton and his first wife, Catherine, had seven children, the first being born in 1734, and although three died in infancy, the necessity for the re-building of the Rectory and also for the speed with which it was undertaken is apparent. (30) Barton was only fifty-five when he died in 1761, having outlived two wives, but during the last eight years of his life he did not keep the

baptismal and burial register - a fact that was noted when Henry Harcourt was appointed to the living. Barton did, however, officiate at marriages until 1758, and the increasing feebleness of his handwriting suggests that he was not a healthy man during the last years of his life.(31) He was buried with both his wives in a vault under the chancel in Warbleton church, and a black marble slab bears their monumental inscription.

Barton's improvements to the Rectory were not particularly extensive. At least, the house was not sufficiently spacious to meet the needs of Victorian rectors, for it was enlarged again in the nineteenth century. Henry Harcourt the Rector who followed Barton, must have lived in the rectory when he first came to Warbleton, but he deserted it for the Stonehouse when he married Mrs. Baker (nee Roberts). He then leased the rectory lands, but it is not clear from his account book whether his tenant occupied the house, whether his curates lived there, or whether it was left empty.(32)

Litlington

Another rectory, which would have benefited from similar treatment, was in a downland parish where the rectors were less wealthy. The deterioration of Litlington rectory is sparsely documented, but the evidence does highlight some of the causes behind its neglect. The churchwardens at Michaelmas 1693 had presented, 'The parsonage house is much out of repair in the walls windows, healing and other places.'(33) Similar presentments were

made at Easter and at Michaelmas 1701.(34) In 1724 the house was described as being 'pretty well healed', so at least the roof had been repaired, but it was 'bad within side', and the barn was in need of repair.(35) In 1727, the churchwardens again presented, 'The Parsonage House and barn out of repair.'(36) Dilapidation was a recurring problem, partially because the house, like many clergy houses, was very old. It still contains a small stone-framed window with twin, rounded arches.(37) It is also probable that when repairs were carried out, they were undertaken as cheaply as possible and were never of a substantial nature. The house now has an eighteenth-century facade, and although there is no documentation about the date of rebuilding, it is obvious that some extensive alterations were made during the course of that century.

The problem with Litlington was that although it was a rectory, the living was not well endowed, having only four acres of glebe - one acre on the site of the Rectory and in 1678 three acres in the common fields. Nor did the Rector receive all the tithes, for half of the tithe of corn, wool and lambs in Litlington Manor - apart from those payable on a stipulated area comprising thirteen acres - had been granted to the Prebendary of Highleigh, though the Rector did receive all the tithes from Clapham Manor.(38) Since Litlington was a downland manor where, from time immemorial, agriculture had been concerned mainly with sheep/corn husbandry, the tithes payable to the Prebendary would have

represented a substantial portion of the rectorial income. The result was that the Rectors tended to be impoverished or pluralists and absentees.

John Graveit, who had been indicted for being a common drunkard in the same year as he had been appointed Rector of Litlington, had died insolvent in about 1679, having moved to the parish of East Dean, where he had allowed that vicarage to decay. (39) William Edwards, his successor at Litlington, who was presented to the rectory in May 1676, was in trouble with the Bishop by 1682 for not paying his procurations and synodals. The following year he was suspended from clerical office and administration of the sacrament - presumably for the same reason. (40) After the departure of Edwards (who was later re-instated at West Dean) the living at Litlington was vacant for four years. In 1687 William Hurst, ordained priest in 1684 and only recently licensed to preach by the Bishop of Chichester, was presented by the Bishop and instituted. Although he remained Rector in name until 1701, he too was in trouble before his departure. In February 1700 Hurst was presented as being non-resident, and on 28th March sequestration of the rectory was granted to Jonathan Darby, vicar of Wilmington. (41) Darby had evidently been ministering at Litlington before this date, since he seems to have kept the registers there from 1695 - the previous ones having disappeared. (42) The sentence against Hurst seems to have had little effect for in September 1701 Henry Bean churchwarden of Litlington declared on oath, 'that Mr. Hurst

the Rector hath been absent from the parish of Litlington and taken no care of the cure of souls there for fifteen monthes and upwards and that the Buildings belonging to the said rectory are very ruinous and gone to decay insomuch that if speedy care be not taken the parsonage house will fall down.' William Hurst was deprived of the Rectory the following day.(43)

On March 18th Jonathan Darby was formally admitted to the rectory, having been granted a dispensation by the Archbishop of Canterbury to hold the domestic chaplaincy to Mary, Baroness Dowager of Bury St. Edmunds, together with the rectory of Litlington and the vicarage of Friston cum East Dean.(44) Although the number of his preferments suggests that he should have been financially stable and well able to afford it, there is no evidence to show whether Darby repaired the rectory, or even whether he lived there, though his daughter Anne was baptised in Litlington church on March 4th 1706. However, the Rector seems to have deserted Litlington after this date, since the register is signed thereafter by Robert Nurth (Vicar of Alfriston 1671-1709), who signed himself as 'curate.'(45) Darby resided at East Dean where he became famous. In order to avoid domestic strife, he was reputed to have excavated a cave out of the solid cliff underneath Belle Tout. This refuge consisted of two apartments and a staircase. Here, on stormy nights, he hung out warning lights, 'to guide and save shipwrecked mariners.'(46) He was also in

correspondence with the Admiralty and informed them of raids on the coast by French marauders. (47)

Jonathan Darby died in 1726. He was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Browne, a bachelor, who remained at Litlington until his death in 1763. It may have been he who rebuilt the rectory, for he signed the new register at Litlington in 1727. (48) He was domiciled in the parish when he made his will and when he died. He had owned land in Hailsham and left legacies of £40 and £50 to four nephews and nieces and smaller sums to other relatives. He also bequeathed to his housekeeper, Mrs. Margaret Smythe, his best bed and its furniture, together with all his linen, and he stipulated that the residue of his estate should be invested to provide her with an income of six pounds a year. (49) There is no evidence that Browne was a pluralist, yet his financial position compares favourably with that of his predecessors and is hard to explain. His relatives in Hellingly appear to have been of yeoman stock, so his living standards may not have been too demanding and since he was a bachelor, his expenditure would certainly have been less than that of a married man with children.

Alfriston and West Dean

Two clergy houses in the lower Cuckmere area - Alfriston and West Dean - are notable as survivals of medieval architecture. Both appear to have been abandoned by their incumbents in the late seventeenth century, or early eighteenth century. The unfortunate Robert Nurth, who died in 1709, was probably the last vicar of Alfriston

to reside in the timber framed house situated near the church, since both his immediate successors, Richard Russell (1709-1714) and Walter Bartelotte (1715-1732) were also vicars of Selmeston and were domiciled in that parish, while later incumbents had affiliations with Wilmington, Litlington and Seaford. (50) At West Dean the 13th- century rectory may have been abandoned before the end of the seventeenth century. Tobias Gyles, who died in 1670 was a resident and made his will in West Dean, but Thomas Brett, rector from 1670-1678 and all his successors were pluralists - some of them being Rectors of Folkington. (51) It is very difficult to establish that any of these men was ever resident in in West Dean, since even those rectors who signed the registers annually may simply have done so during an occasional visit to the parish. The flint and sandstone rectory had been sturdily built, possibly as early as 1350, and its structural soundness was not questioned, although at the time of the 1724 Visitation the ceiling of one of the chambers was falling. (52)

Berwick

At Berwick a new parsonage house had been built by Parson Nutt in 1619, and a new barn in 1620. The parsonage house was further amended and completed in 1635-6. It formed three sides of a quadrangle, with a courtyard in the centre, the two wings having their gables towards the church. It was a two storey building, with cellars and an attic floor. (53) This house, including a brewhouse, a new

barn, a pigeon house, a new well and a wall which encompassed the close, courts, parlour gardens and kitchen garden had cost Parson Nutt over seven hundred pounds, despite the fact that much of the timber for building had come from his own land in the neighbouring parish of Ripe. (54) The parsonage house and two barns were in good repair in 1724, although a cottage belonging to the parsonage, had fallen down in the great storm in 1703. (55) This was during the period that John Hawes I (1695-1743) was in residence. After his death, his eldest son John who became rector, chose to remain at Glynde, where he had built a new vicarage. (56) In 1768 when John II died, his nephew William succeeded to the family living. By this time the house was in need of attention. The south wing was pulled down in about 1770. (57) The remainder of the house was demolished in 1847, when a new Victorian gothic parsonage was built by Edward Boyes Ellman. (58)

The Evidence of the Nineteenth Century

Heathfield Vicarage had the advantage of being rebuilt in the eighteenth century, while Warbleton and also Litlington Rectories were partially restored or redesigned. It is apparent that other clergy residences would have benefited from similar treatment. In the nineteenth century, West Dean rectory was enlarged, as was Warbleton, while seven other Cuckmere clergy houses were totally rebuilt - those at Alfriston, Arlington, Berwick, Chiddingly, Hellingly, Seaford and Waldron. In Alfriston, Arlington, Chiddingly, Hellingly and Seaford an entirely new

site with more spacious grounds was chosen. At least three of the original dwellings are still in existence, and could, presumably, have continued in use as clergy houses, had it not been for the greater aspirations of later occupants. The huge parsonages, set in extensive grounds, which are much commented upon as being a common feature of clerical life, were, in the Cuckmere Valley, entirely a product of the nineteenth century.

Eighteenth century clergy were far less demanding about their accommodation than their nineteenth century counterparts. In the two high-wealden parishes of Warbleton and Heathfield the clergy can be assumed to have acquired a comfortable, though not excessively large, residence after 1730. At Warbleton this had been deserted by the incumbent for the superior amenities of the mansion inherited by his wife after 1770. Elsewhere, living conditions must have varied from fair to basic. In late seventeenth-century Leicestershire about one parish in ten lacked a parsonage.(59) This was also the case in the Cuckmere Valley at that period, though eighty years later the ratio had increased to one in four. Seaford was the only parish where there was no clergy house for the whole of the period 1660-1780; at Lullington, where the church itself had shrunk to the size of a chapel, the vicarage had also disappeared in effect, if not in fact by 1724; at Arlington the parsonage disappeared between 1686 and 1724. In each case, responsibility ultimately lay with Officials of

Chichester Cathedral, since Seaford and Arlington belonged to two Prebendaries and Lullington was the property of the Dean and Chapter. As Lady Bracknell might have remarked, 'to lose one vicarage in so small an area is unfortunate, to lose three, smacks of carelessness'.

CHAPTER VII - CLERGY HOUSES - REFERENCES

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CHAPTER VIII

DISSENT - THE DIFFICULT YEARS 1660-1690

The Legacy of the Reformation

The Reformation in England introduced a new and divisive element into village life. Afterwards, no-one could be absolutely sure that their neighbours shared the same religious views as themselves. The nature of this dilemma was exemplified in the wealden parish of Warbleton where, in the reign of Mary Tudor, Richard Woodman was lessee of Warbleton manor and a prosperous ironmaster. (1) An altercation with a former curate of the parish, whom he accused of 'turning head to tail' and 'preaching clean contrary to that which he had before taught', brought him into conflict with the Catholic authorities and although they were disposed to deal leniently with him because of his wealth and influence, his uncompromising puritanism resulted in martyrdom. He died at the stake in Lewes, together with George Stevens, also of Warbleton; Margerie Morys and James 'her sonne' of Heathfield; and six others in June 1557. (2) Not the least part of the tragedy lay in the fact that Woodman had been betrayed to the authorities by members of his own family. In the future, those who disagreed with the national religion established by law would be forced to beware of the reactions of their family, friends and neighbours.

The Elizabethan church settlement had been master-minded by the Queen herself, and had not always been

approved by her bishops or her ministers. During the latter part of her reign particularly, Elizabeth had launched a vendetta against religious extremists. Both Catholics and Puritans suffered as a result of her fear of their treason. Sixty years later, after a move towards what was to become known as anglicanism, and a violent reaction towards extreme puritanism, which resulted in regicide, the foundation of a commonwealth and finally, the restoration of the monarchy, the same two groups were again to suffer, and for the same reason.

In spite of the promises made by Charles II at Breda, the various acts which constituted the Clarendon Code made outcasts of both Catholic and Protestant Dissenters, for it was believed that their meetings and meeting places would be 'likely centres for plotting against the restored King.' (3) English religious policy was no longer all-embracing, and deviants - not just Catholics but extreme Puritans as well - were now divided by law from their conforming fellow parishioners. 'In the period 1660-90 the Church of England effectively abandoned the attempt to be the church of the whole English people.' (4) The schism in village life, brought about by the Reformation widened. It was now illegal for churchwardens and local officials, such as constables and headboroughs of hundreds, not to report on clandestine meetings of dissenters. In July 1685 Thomas Cleaver and Robert Hamblyn, constables of the hundred of Alfriston were indicted at Quarter Sessions 'for permitting conventicles frequently to be held within the hundred...and

not using their endeavour to prevent and suppress the same, nor making complaint thereof to some Justice of the Peace.' (5) The indictment of Cleaver and Hamblyn stresses the enormity of the pressure on local officials, whose loyalty to their neighbours was constantly at risk.

With the re-establishment of the Church of England, the Catholics (called Recusants), whose numbers in the Cuckmere area were minute, in common with the extreme Puritans (called Dissenters) who believed that reform of the Established Church had not been sufficiently sweeping and who had, therefore, decided to separate themselves from it, were forced to resort to stealth, if they wished to hold meetings or services according to their own beliefs. At this period, Sussex Dissenters were generally considered to be divided into three groups; Quakers (members of the Society of Friends), Anabaptists (later abbreviated to Baptists) and Presbyterians (a group which seems to have included Independents and any other dissenters who, in the official mind, were neither Quakers nor Baptists.) (6)

Early Records of Dissent

It has been shown that in the Cuckmere Valley, as in Eastern Sussex as a whole, Archbishop Laud's reforms had not been well received and that puritan ideals had been generally popular. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that at the Restoration many dissenters resided in the valley. In the years immediately following 1660 it is often difficult to trace their activities, because they left

few records. However, the Society of Friends established a particularly strong group in their Eastern Sussex Meeting, which was mainly centred in parishes close to the Cuckmere and, because the Quakers were methodical and propagandist their activities tend to dominate this period. In 1655 George Fox had visited Steyning and Lewes and 'travelled from thence eastward to Warbleton and them parts.' (7) He had preached at Rushlake Green, where there is a field still called 'Fox's Field', on land owned at that time by the Ellis family, who were ardent supporters of the Society of Friends. The Quakers' *Book of Sufferings* records frequent cases of imprisonment of Friends from Warbleton after Fox's visit. It also suggests that there was Quaker activity in Seaford, where John Willet had caused a disturbance in the Steeple House by stating that 'what the priest had laid down...could not be proved by Scripture.' (8)

Fox may also have visited Alfriston and before 1669 Friends had been meeting at the Star Inn there, for Gregory Markwick of that parish, whose will was proved in March 1669, bequeathed five shillings apiece to Friends belonging to the Alfriston meeting 'that usually meets there the first days at the Starr House.' (9) That this was, indeed the will of a Quaker is suggested not only by the bequest to Friends, but also by the use of the phrase, 'The first days'. For the Quakers refused to name the days of the week by their pagan names and referred to Sunday as 'the first day'. The choice of venue for this Quaker meeting is unusual, but the early dissenters were forced to dissemble,

sometimes pretending that their gathering was a social affair. Perhaps the Alfriston Friends considered it unlikely that the authorities would expect a religious meeting to be held in an alehouse. Certainly it does not seem to have been discovered, though Markwick's will would surely have revealed the existence of the meeting to the archdeacon's court where it was proved.

If it was difficult for the Friends to hold meetings, it was even more difficult for them to bury their dead, especially before the establishment of their own burial grounds, but their difficulties in this respect do reveal their presence in several Cuckmere parishes. In 1673 an indignant parson at Heathfield recorded that he had buried, 'the pretended wife of William Tysehurst, Quaker.' (12) There were also Quakers living in Arlington, for the parson of Berwick recorded in his register in February 1661, 'buried by the parents without notice given to me a maiden child; the parents of this child are Quakers. The father's name John Elphicke, commonly called of Arlington'. Another Berwick entry, also relating to Arlington parish, read 'Memorandum that about twenty weeks agoe William Marquicke of Milton Street brought into the church yard of Berwicke and buried there after the Quakers way, a man child.' (11) These entries, moving in their simplicity, illustrate the secrecy to which Quakers were driven by their beliefs and the tragedy of their situation before they were allowed their own burial grounds, in what would, for any

parent, have been a time of deep personal suffering. At least these children were buried in peace. Worse trials were endured by Quakers from Bishopstone, a parish which bordered on Seaford. In 1669 Friends, hoping to bury Anne Paine, one of their number, near the Quaker Meeting House at Rottingdean were attacked by 'a parcel of wicked men' who took away the corpse and demanded a large ransom for its release, and 'when Friends saw there was noe haveing itt, they went away and leaft it with them and afterwards at their own charge... they buried it in the steeplehouse yard of Newhaven.' (12) The sufferings of Quakers must have been lessened when their own burial grounds were established at Warbleton in 1669 and at Alfriston in 1674. The registers of the Friends' meetings at Alfriston have not survived, but those for the Warbleton Meeting are extant and provide evidence of births, marriages and deaths from 1660 until the middle of the eighteenth century, showing a high incidence of infant mortality among Friends. (13)

The Quakers were well organised and the minutes of their monthly meetings in Eastern Sussex were recorded from 1669. They were also particularly zealous in voicing their beliefs. If they fell foul of the authorities because of those beliefs, they itemised their resulting sufferings in writing. Other dissenters were more cautious and consequently their activities, especially in the period immediately after 1660, are not so well documented as those of the Quakers. The General Baptists had completed their system of regional associations before 1660, and the first

General Baptist Assembly was held in London in 1654.(14) However, there are no Baptist records for this early period, which relate to the Cuckmere Valley.

Evidence of nonconformity was recorded in the Quarter Sessions Indictments as early as 1663, when William Ticehurst of Heathfield was indicted for not going to church. The following year John Ellis, yeoman, and John Marten, a tailor, both of Warbleton were indicted for not taking the oath of allegiance.(15) Ticehurst, as well as Ellis and Martin belonged to the Society of Friends, and the earliest indictments are concerned with members of this group. The event which resulted in the indictment of the men from Warbleton was also recorded in the Book of Sufferings.(16) Ellis and Marten, with others had attended a 'peaceable' meeting of Friends at East Blatchington, when they were arrested and taken before two justices. Having refused 'for conscience sake' to swear agreement to the oath of allegiance, they were committed to Horsham gaol. Although the Indictments are a useful source of information regarding dissent, they are by no means all-embracing, for it was not until 1681 that a couple from Heathfield, John and Constance Grover, who can definitely be traced as Baptists, were indicted at Quarter Sessions for not attending church.(17)

There was also evidence of deviation at Seaford where, in February 1665, sixteen people were indicted by the Corporation for not having attended the parish church for

the space of one month.(18) It is possible that not all these people were dissenters - some of them may merely have been backsliding members of the established church, but several of the surnames mentioned do appear in other indictments relating to nonconformity, although not always in connection with Seaford. As a limb of the cinque port of Hastings (an honour never rescinded, although its harbour had vanished in 1539) Seaford was exempt from much local and county jurisdiction, but here as elsewhere, non-attendance at church was normally a matter dealt with by the ecclesiastical courts. The fact that it was also being reported by Seaford Corporation and, by other parishes, to the Justices at Quarter Sessions suggests that the authorities, at a local level, were worried by the growth of dissent and by the inability of the ecclesiastical functionaries to deal effectively with the malefactors.

It was the responsibility of the churchwardens to present parishioners who did not attend their parish church, but the zeal with which presentations for this offence were made depended very much on the attitude of individual churchwardens and the local parson. The longest list of presentations in the Cuckmere parishes comes from Warbleton, where there were meetings of Baptists and Quakers. The presentments made between 1674-7 even go so far as to distinguish between the adherents of these two sects - a step not taken in any of the other Cuckmere parishes. It suggests a decided antipathy to the existence of these two groups within the parish and neighbourhood relationships

must have been very strained. In other parishes churchwardens often presented their fellow parishioners 'for not paying their church tax' or for 'not coming to church to hear divine service' and often it is difficult to tell whether these backsliders were lapsed anglicans or dissenters. (19)

In 1669, at the request of Archbishop Sheldon, a list was made of the number of Conventicles held in each diocese. The return for the Diocese of Chichester shows that, at this time, two conventicles existed in Warbleton, one for Quakers and one for 'other sects'. A conventicle of Baptists was recorded at Heathfield. At Alfriston two meetings were being held, one of Quakers, which consisted of 'three or four families' and one of Anabaptists. (20) It is difficult to assess the exact numbers of dissenters from this list, for in some parishes individuals were counted and in others heads of families.

Three years later, at a time when parliament was not in session, Charles II, acting without its consent, published a Declaration of Indulgence. He had genuinely desired 'a liberty to tender consciences' on his return from exile and his hopes for a moderate ecclesiastical policy had been thwarted by over-zealous Anglicans and un-cooperative Puritans. (21) In 1672, worried about the severity of the penal laws, Charles made a serious attempt to introduce religious toleration and declared 'We shall from time to time allow a sufficient number of places as shall be desired

in all parts of our kingdom for the use of such as do not conform to the Church of England, to meet and assemble in, in order to perform their public Worship and Devotion.' (22) He stipulated that no meetings were to be held until he had given permission and approved the teacher of the congregation. Charles was later forced to cancel the declaration, since parliament, at its next session, decreed that 'the penal statutes in matters ecclesiastical cannot be suspended but by Act of Parliament.' However, twenty-six licences were applied for by people living in Sussex as a result of this declaration, and though the Baptists and the Friends would not make applications, meetings of Presbyterians were recorded for the parishes of Arlington, Hellingly and Waldron.

Charles II's attempt to introduce limited toleration had disastrous results. It was followed almost immediately by the Test Act, passed by Parliament in 1673, which made it obligatory for any office holder to take communion according to the rites of the Church of England. By this act, 'A religious ceremony was made into a test of fitness for holding secular office'. (23) It drove even deeper the wedge separating dissenters from conforming fellow parishioners. Men of ability were precluded from holding parish office - even those whose successful performance was as little subject to religious principles as Overseer or Surveyor. Between March 1665 and March 1672 Samuel Webb, who was a Quaker, acted as Overseer in Alfriston on four separate occasions, but not thereafter. (24)

The Compton Census 1676

The passing of the Test Act spurred the ecclesiastical authorities into making a record of the numbers of dissenters. In 1676 Bishop Compton of London, at the instigation of Archbishop Sheldon, gathered information about the numbers of conformists, papists and dissenters, which has become known as the Compton Census.(25) It is, however, not generally regarded as numerically reliable evidence and the number of non-conformists is believed to have been greater than shown in the census, for 'Archbishop Sheldon's purpose was to prepare for new repression by proving how few the dissenters were.'(26) What is evident from the returns, in which an attempt was made to estimate the population of each parish above the age of sixteen, is that there were dissenters in every one of the twelve Cuckmere parishes, though no Roman Catholics were recorded at all. This may have been wishful thinking on the part of the authorities, for by 1680 five people from Berwick had been detected of recusancy by their churchwardens.(27)

The Compton Census 1676 - Returns for Cuckmere Parishes

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Conformists</u>	<u>Non-Conformists</u>
Alfriston	120	21
Arlington	207	4
Berwick	66	4
Chiddingly	216	4
Heathfield	390	10
Hellingly	184	16
Lullington	14	6
Litlington	45	6
Seaford	192	10
Waldron	237	3
Warbleton	260	40
West Dean	30	1

The low population figures for the Downland parishes are not unreasonable, since many had been de-populated by this time. The proportion of dissenters to conformists in Lullington - over 28% - does seem high, but is probably correct. The 1662 Hearth Tax returns show that five householders from Lullington had been taxed.(28) A detached portion of Lullington parish lay to the south of and sandwiched the neighbouring parish of Litlington. This caused some confusion about the parish of domicile of people living in Lullington. John Brooke of Lullington was indicted at Quarter Sessions in April 1685 for holding a conventicle in his house. At the same time John Willard and Thomas Banks and his wife, also of Lullington, were indicted for not going to church, as were Robert and Hannah Morris of Litlington, who had been similarly charged the previous year when they had, apparently, been living in Lullington.(29) John Brooke, like the Morrises and the Banks was, in fact, a Quaker and meetings of the Eastern Sussex Friends had regularly taken place at his house in 1682 and 1683.(30)

The two downland parishes with high population levels, Alfriston and Seaford, were not typical, but their deviation from the norm can be accounted for by the fact that both parishes had once been of some local importance and the largest nucleated settlement, in both cases, was a town rather than a village. In the wealden parishes, which were all larger in area than those on the downs, the greatest number of dissenters - about 15% - was gathered in Warbleton where the meetings of both Baptists and Quakers were

recorded. The small number of dissenters in Waldron may not be truly representative, though no inhabitants of that parish were indicted at Quarter Sessions at this time, for non-attendance at church. However, the churchwardens' Presentments and Bills of Detection do accuse more than three parishioners of absenteeism. Widow Pollington and Sarah Willard were guilty of this offence several times between the years 1675-1686 and may well have been dissenters, while Messrs Roads and Beard, John Parkes senior and junior and Mary Day, mentioned once apiece, may have been backsliding Anglicans, presented as a matter of form. (31)

Concessions under James II

It was in 1686 that another list of Cuckmere dissenters was provided in the Quarter Sessions Indictments. In that year James II came to the conclusion that 'the Church of England would never consent to the liberty he wanted for Roman Catholics'. (32) He decided that, in order to obtain some concessions for them he would also have to extend these to the protestant dissenters and issued a general pardon to those imprisoned for religious offences. During the years 1686 and 1687 the names of those indicted for not attending church were listed in the Indictment Book at Lewes and described as having been exonerated by a general pardon. (33) They included names of hardened offenders from seven Cuckmere parishes:

Alfriston - 11: Arlington - 12: Chiddingly - 4:
Heathfield - 5: Litlington - 2: Lullington - 4:
Warbleton - 22.

Again, it is possible that not all these people were dissenters. The absence of offenders from Hellingly is surprising, for there were certainly some Presbyterians living there and, in 1674, a monthly meeting of the Society of Friends had taken place in the parish. (34) Hellingly churchwardens do not appear to have been over-zealous in presenting religious offenders, though it is impossible to tell whether their laxity was due to a desire to protect dissenters or themselves, since they may not have wanted to admit the existence of non-conformists in their parish. It is also possible that the parishioners at Hellingly were more tolerant towards dissenters than those in other parishes. It was from Hellingly that a puritan minister, John Stone had been ejected for refusing to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity in 1662 and, although he had been licensed as a Presbyterian preacher at the house of Nicholas Winton in Waldron in 1672, he may also have been ministering illegally to his former parishioners, for he was buried in Hellingly in 1688. (35) There is a strong suggestion that Stone commanded some loyalty in his former parish.

Evidence from Wills

It has been suggested that the preambles to the wills of people below the gentry class may not be suitable mirrors of the minds of the testators, since they may not have been responsible for writing them. (36) A study of Cuckmere wills for the period 1660-1690 proved in the Archdeaconry court at Lewes shows that in many cases no preamble had been

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written at all, especially in the years immediately following the Restoration - perhaps the testators or their scribes considered it safer not to commit themselves. Most were content to submit their souls to God and others expressed the trust that they would assuredly 'be saved by the merits and passion of Jesus Christ' - both beliefs accepted by the established church. It is possible that many dissenters may have been included in this group and left no trace of their real allegiance, because their wills had been written by members of the Church of England. There are some, however, which stand out as having been especially written and these generally express decidedly puritan views. Even though the actual composition may not have been the testators' brainchild, the sentiments expressed are so strong that they must have been especially selected by them.

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The will of William Moon, a yeoman from Heathfield, proved in 1669, showed a Calvinistic belief in the predestination of the elect, which suggests that he must have been a dissenter. He wrote that being 'penitent and sorry from the bottom of my heart for all my sins past, most humbly desiring forgiveness of the same... I commit my soul to Almighty God ...in whom I trust and believe assuredly to be saved and to have full remission of all my sins, that my soul and body at the general day of Resurrection shall rise again with joy through the merits of Christs death and possess and inherit the kingdom of Heaven, prepared for his elect and chosen...' (37) Another inhabitant of the Weald,

Richard Smith, a millwright from Waldron who died in 1674, expressed similar views although they were less verbose. He hoped that, 'my soule with my body att the general day of the resurrection shall rise again and inherit the kingdom of Heaven prepared for the elect and chosen of God.' (38) In Waldron parish too, there appear some wills in which the testators refer to their chosen overseers as, 'my well beloved friend in Christ', which does not appear to have been a style of address chosen by members of the Church of England. It is significant that beneficiaries or witnesses of these wills often have the same surnames as those of proved dissenters of a later generation. (39)

These hints at the puritan beliefs of Cuckmere residents were not confined to the most northerly parishes. Perhaps Thomas Heasman a weaver from Arlington and Nicholas Dobson a yeoman from Berwick were not Calvinists, but their wills reveal a deeply held puritan faith in the physical resurrection of the body. Dobson, who died in 1662 wrote, 'I bequeath my soule into the hands of God from whom I received it trusting by faith in Jesus Christ my most gracious redeemer that at the last day I shall receive it again in glory to be united to my body that soe body and soule may make one glorious man in Christ,' while Heasman, who died twenty years later affirmed, 'I trust and believe assuredly to be saved and to have full remission and forgiveness of all my sins and that my soul with my body at the general day of resurrection shall rise againe with joy

and through the merits of Christ's death and passion possess and inherit the kingdom of heaven.' (40)

Apart from the Quakers, whose activities will be dealt with at length in a later chapter, the records of this early period give a very hazy picture of a particularly dedicated group of people - people who thought long and earnestly about their ultimate salvation; who found the answers to most of their problems in the words of the Bible, on which they based their code of conduct; people who desired a one-to-one relationship with God; and who saw no virtue in the hierarchy of the established church. They may have differed from each other on points of church government and disagreed on some of the more debatable doctrinal issues, but they were all dissenters and as such were liable to the same pressures during the thirty years when they were the outcasts of society. Yet during those years they thrived, spiritually, if not numerically, for it is difficult to judge their numbers since the only statistics were compiled by members of the established church who wished to deny their strength. 'The greatest spokesmen of the persecuted groups noted that their sufferings had led to fuller life and to incalculable spiritual benefits.' (41) Certainly the preambles to their wills reflect joy and hope, rather than sadness and depression.

CHAPTER VIII - REFERENCES - DISSENT - THE DIFFICULT YEARS

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CHAPTER IX

THE DECLINE OF DISSENT 1690-1780

Limited Toleration

It is ironical that a Catholic King should have been the instrument by whom Protestant dissenters gained a limited freedom. The amnesty declared by James II in 1686 gave some relief; his departure and the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 provoked a religious settlement which brought further concessions. The power of the Anglican establishment shifted away from the Tory supporters of a divinely-chosen (and Catholic) monarchy towards the Whig aristocracy and gentry, who were to achieve political power in the eighteenth century. Although the Revolution settlement, designed to accommodate the supporters of the Protestant William III, underlined the religious schism promoted in 1662 it marked the beginning of begrudging toleration for dissenters. The Toleration Act of 1689 allowed them to have their own places of worship - provided they kept the doors unlocked; and it allowed them to have their own teachers - but from the early eighteenth century these teachers were required to be licensed. Dissenters had to inform the local incumbent when their children were born; and, apart from the Quakers, who had received special dispensation, they were required to be married according to the ceremonies of the established church. When they died, they could be buried in parish churchyards only with Anglican rites - or none at all.(1)

Parish registers suggest that there was a great deal of confusion about the proper way to cope with the records of non-conformist births, marriages, and deaths. While some incumbents adopted a serious attitude towards dissenters, and others were inclined to be offhand, all appear to have been antagonistic. The Warbleton register has two entries, one of which was evidently a mistake, suggesting that a curate or the parish clerk had been exceeding his duties, or that the Rector Anthony Nethercott, newly returned from Ashburnham, where he had long been resident, had been neglecting his. It read, 'April 5th 1696, Nicholas Barden gave notice of his having a child born to William Grace, Collector and April the 10th he informed me that he called his child Martha tho' unbaptized.' A different hand recorded that these entries should not have been inserted, as 'they are set down before in this book in a distinct Register of children unbaptized of Disenters...' Upside down, on the last page of the volume, was the heading, 'A Register of such persons as were born in the parish of Warbleton since the 24th day of June 1696, but not christened within five days of their birth.' There followed a list of names of children of Baptists and Quakers - the last date recorded being in 1698. At Alfriston, too, there is a list of non-conformist registrations kept separately and running from 1737-1775.(2) In both cases the dates for making a separate entry seem to have been completely arbitrary and, in the case of Warbleton, 1698 most certainly did not mark the end of the non-conformist

presence in the parish.

In other parishes registrations concerning dissenters were not kept separately. On February 8th 1696 it was recorded, quite simply, in Waldron parish register, 'was buried Sarah Willard the Anabaptist.' (3) A phlegmatic entry relating to a marriage at Chiddingly leaves some doubt as to what really did happen, 'February 4, 1702/3, Samuel Horsecroft and Hannah Panke were married here both of this parish or so reputed at length after one demurr The Banes being publshed for their Marrying twice in the Church and was forbid the 3rd time of asking but to no effect it proved. Anabaptists.' (4)

Having gained the right to exist and to hold meetings, the dissenters were still hampered by red tape. In order to ensure that an assembly was legal it had to be licensed by the bishop or at quarter sessions, and the place of the meeting had also to be stated. The licences applied for in the Cuckmere Valley from 1690-1780 fall into three distinct groups. All the seventeenth century episcopal licences were granted to Baptists. In the early eighteenth century, it was only the Presbyterians who applied to the Bishop. There was one application by the Quakers, which was granted by the justices at Quarter Sessions in 1705 to Ambrose Galloway and others to hold a meeting at Hellingly. Galloway was, in fact, a member of the Lewes Meeting, and was applying on behalf of the members of the Eastern Sussex Meeting, which had operated on a regular basis in several of the Cuckmere

parishes since 1680 at least. Between 1721 and 1770 no licences were granted, and in the latter year two more meetings were licensed - one for 'Protestant Dissenters' and one for 'Anabaptists'. (5)

Baptist Meeting Houses 1690-1705

The first Cuckmere licences were granted by the Bishop of Chichester on July 22nd 1690. There were four, and this small number suggests that there was still some reluctance among non-conformists to avail themselves of the opportunity of legalising their meetings.

LICENCES FOR BAPTIST MEETING HOUSES ISSUED 1690-1705

1690	Warbleton	- At the house of Joseph Mitten
	Heathfield	- " " " " John Vine
	Waldron	- " " " " Robert Norden
	Chiddingly	- " " " " Edward Howell
1692	Chiddingly	- " " " " John Mitten
1699	Chiddingly	- " " " " Henry Miller
1705	Hellingly	- " " " " Henry Miller

The licences issued in 1690 were all for meetings of 'Anabaptists' and they covered four parishes, Warbleton, Heathfield, Waldron and Chiddingly. In November 1692 another licence to hold an Anabaptist meeting in Chiddingly was granted to John Mitten (possibly a relative of Joseph Mitten who was allowed to hold a meeting in Warbleton). The new Chiddingly licence may have been granted because Edward Howell, the original licensee, had moved to Heathfield for he was living there when he died in 1706. (6)

It seems to have been understood - whether this was legally the case or not - that a licence once granted to a

specific person remained the personal property of the grantee, for it is clear from Howell's will that Baptist meetings had been held at his new domicile. Edward Howell, who was a glover, left most of his money in trust. His trustee was to allow 'the congregation or people of Believers Baptized meeting about Warbleton to hold their usual assemblies in the parlour of my now dwelling with the table clock bench forms chaires and all other conveniences as they have had... during my life time as well on Lord's days as on other days, as well for divine worship as for the better regulating the affairs of the church, alsoe providing and allowing the preacher of the word some necessary refreccion from time to time...' Howell was very careful to ensure that all the facilities provided at his house should still be available to the congregation, including refreshment for the preacher. The details of his home, contained in the will, help to illustrate the nature of these simple gatherings in the parlour of one of the faithful. It is also evident that meetings were held not just on Sundays, but also on weekdays, contrasting with the services of the established church which were normally held only on Sunday.

The first licences issued went to four Baptists who lived in different Wealden parishes, and it is possible that small local meetings were held in individual parishes at this date. The inventory of Joseph Mitten, who was granted a licence to hold a meeting in Warbleton in 1690, suggests

that his house was not large, and that had the meeting consisted of more than a dozen people, it would have been very crowded. His living room - described in the inventory as 'the fire room' was also the kitchen. It was sparsely furnished, although there were sufficient chairs and forms to seat about a dozen people. Mitten had possessed two tables (one was described as 'small') and three forms (two of these were 'small') as well as six chairs, two cupboards and 'a shelve of bookes'. (7)

Edward Howell, the glover, was a resident of Heathfield, although it is clear from his will that meetings of the Warbleton Baptists had been held in his house. This suggests that the separate meetings held in Warbleton, Heathfield, Waldron and Chiddingly, also joined as a single regional church, and that this regional church became the centre of activities in the early eighteenth century. This possibility is strengthened by provisions made in the will of John Grover of Heathfield in October 1714, in which he bequeathed an annuity to his loving friend Robert Norden of Waldron 'elder of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ consisting of believers Baptized and meeting in and about Warbleton.' A proviso that Norden should continue to serve the church as an elder was included in the will. (18)

Episcopal records show that between 1692 and 1721 only two further licences were issued to Baptists, and they were both to Henry Miller, a convert to the Baptist cause, who later became a Messenger. When the first licence was issued to him in 1699 he was living in Chiddingly, where his father

owned Burghill. By 1705, the date of the second licence, Miller had moved to Hellingly, where he owned a farm called Winkinghurst. Unlike Howell he evidently thought it necessary to re-apply when he moved. He had, though, been an attorney by profession. The group of Chiddingly Baptists who originally met at Edward Howell's house and, when he moved to Heathfield, at John Mitten's and then at Henry Miller's, probably changed their venue to Hellingly when Miller moved there. They seem to have remained part of the regional church centred on Warbleton, for Henry Miller was a representative for Warbleton at the Baptist General Assembly in 1709.(9)

Licences to Presbyterians 1704-1721

Although a meeting of Presbyterians was held in Hellingly in the seventeenth century, there is no evidence to show that this meeting was registered by the Bishop of Chichester, for the Bishop issued no licences for Presbyterians until the beginning of the eighteenth century, when five licences were granted to people living in Arlington, Hellingly and Seaford.(10)

PRESBYTERIAN MEETING HOUSE LICENCES ISSUED 1703-1721

1703	Arlington	-	At the House of John Geal.
1710	Sutton		
	in Seaford	- " " "	" Stephen Pollington.
1710	Arlington	- " " "	" John Mephram.
1720	Hellingly	- " " "	" Challoner Mills.
1721	Hellingly	- " " "	" Rachel Luxford, widow.

No applications for licenses had been made by Presbyterians in 1690, although the Return of Conventicles

1669, showed that a meeting of Presbyterians was held at the house of Samuel Barton in Hellingly. In fact, Barton had received a licence from the King when Charles II made his ill-fated Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. The King had allowed Samuel Barton, who had been a churchwarden in Hellingly in 1659, a room or rooms in his house in Hellingly, 'to be a place for the Use of Such as do not conform to the Church of England, who are of the Perswasion commonly called "presbyterion" to meet and assemble in, in order to their publick Worship and Devotion...' (11) The Presbyterians meeting at Hellingly must have considered this licence permanently valid for they did not apply for another licence until 1720, ten years after the death of Samuel Barton.

In 1679 Samuel Barton sold his house in Hellingly to his brother-in-law George Luxford the Sheriff of Sussex. The reason for this sale is not known, and the house - Carter's Corner Place - had been in the possession of the Barton family for some considerable time. It is possible that as a dissenter Barton had been heavily fined and had been forced to take this step through lack of funds. Six years later, both Luxford and Barton were cited by a grand jury at Lewes Sessions in 1685, accused of having abetted the Monmouth rebellion. Although the rebellion was supported by many non-conformists, most of them were men of the 'middling sort' - small freeholders and textile workers - who lived in the west country, where Monmouth had landed.

Unless Barton and Luxford were victims of a local vendetta, it is difficult to explain their involvement in this abortive revolt. (12)

Rachel (nee Mills), George Luxford's wife, was a cousin of Challoner Mills, who applied for a licence to hold a Presbyterian meeting at his house called Ponts in Hellingly in 1720. This may have been only a temporary measure. The preacher was named as Thomas Hayes. The following year, at the request of Mrs. Luxford and Thomas Hayes a further licence for a Presbyterian meeting in Hellingly was issued. This meeting was to be held at the house of Mrs. Rachel Luxford, called Carter's Corner, which she had inherited for her life when her husband died in 1710. (13)

Some interesting facts emerge when the relationships between individual members of this Hellingly Presbyterian group are studied. Both Mrs. Luxford and Challoner Mills left bequests to Mrs. Jordan of Cranbrook in Kent, who had been related to George Luxford (Mrs. Luxford's husband) by marriage. This Mrs. Jordan of Cranbrook was the sister-in-law of George Jordan, Vicar of Heathfield from 1713-1731, and son-inlaw of Bishop Bowers. George Luxford bequeathed Carter's Corner Place (after Mrs. Luxford's decease) to his kinsman Thomas Barton, whose son - also Thomas - was to become Rector of Warbleton in 1732. (14) Mrs. Luxford's support for the Presbyterians must have caused these churchmen some embarrassment, though Presbyterians did attend the Established church as occasional conformists, as well as holding their own meetings, a habit which continued

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to cause annoyance to some Church of England ministers, for the Vicar of Beeston, near Nottingham, reported in 1743, that the majority of his parishioners were 'most of them mongrels that sometimes come to church and sometimes to the Presbyterian or Independent meeting do go.' (15)

} When Mrs. Luxford died she bequeathed a mourning ring to her cousin Challoner Mills, who was one of her executors. Both Mrs. Luxford and Challoner Mills appear to have been remarkably open-minded about the religious beliefs of their relations, for not only did both remember kinfolk belonging to the Established church in their wills, but they also remembered relatives of the Baptist Messenger, George Miller of Hellingly. It is not surprising to discover that neither expressed any decisive theological views in the preamble to their wills, though both committed their souls to God. When Mills died in 1738 he did, however, give an indication of his allegiance to dissent for he bequeathed to Mr. Dear, Mr. Dounal, Mr. Olive, Mr. Force and Mr. Smith of Battle 'all dessenting ministers' five pounds each. (16)

) These bequests indicate the size of the area which Presbyterians covered in their search for teachers, for these five men actually ministered to congregations as far distant as Mayfield, Lewes, Battle and Burwash. (17)

One of the licences issued in 1672 had been to John Beaton, a Presbyterian preacher, who ministered to a meeting at the house of Thomas Lees in Arlington. (18) The free pardon issued by James II in 1686 showed that there had been

over twenty people in Arlington, who had not been attending their parish church regularly, and although no other application for a meeting house in the parish had been made, the continued existence of a conventicle is a distinct possibility. The early eighteenth-century Arlington meeting, held at the house of John Geal, for which a licence was issued in 1703, probably had a fairly short life, for John Geal died in 1704 and his son, who was described as a gentleman when he died in 1760, was a regular churchgoer who acted as an overseer in 1721 and as a churchwarden in 1738. (19) The next Arlington application, made by John Mephram in 1710 stated that John Smith was to be the preacher. Smith was already ministering to a congregation in the neighbouring parish of Hailsham, which suggests that perhaps the Arlington meeting had shrunk in size.

The Size of Dissenting Congregations

Several attempts were made during the early years of the eighteenth century to assess the numbers of dissenters living in the country and the results of at least two of these attempts relate to the Cuckmere Valley. Both suggest that the number of meetings had fallen off, but this may have been due to the consolidation of several local groups into one larger meeting, and not to a decline in numbers. In 1715 the Rev. Josiah Thompson, Minister of a congregation at Clapham in Surrey, made a list of Dissenting Congregations. He recorded a Meeting of Baptists in Warbleton, which numbered 120 and a Presbyterian congregation in Hellingly, which had thirty members. (20)

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The other assessment, made by John Evans, concerned Dissenting Congregations in England and Wales and was compiled at different periods between 1715 and 1729. The figures for Sussex were first drawn up in November 1717 when three Cuckmere meetings were recorded - the meeting of Baptists at Warbleton; the meeting of Presbyterians at Carter's Corner in Hellingly and a meeting at Michelham (in Arlington) Alciston and Hellingly, which is dated as existing in 1727. No mention is made of the number of hearers at this meeting, where in 1727 Samuel Park was the preacher. (21)

Evans gave the numbers of hearers at the Warbleton Baptist meeting as sixty. This was exactly half those given by Josiah Thompson only two years earlier, and although the Warbleton Baptists had had to endure difficulties, because their leadership had been seriously depleted during the decade, there is no reason to suppose that the numbers had declined by 50%. In fact, the all-embracing nature of the Warbleton church at this time might have accounted for the fact that only one meeting of Baptists for the area had been mentioned in the lists of both John Evans and Josiah Thompson.

Evans' list, like that of Thompson, records 30 hearers in the Presbyterian congregation at Hellingly, and this would appear to have been the meeting for which licences were issued to Challoner Mills and Rachel Luxford. With the grant of a licence to Widow Luxford in 1721, the meeting

which had existed for so long in Hellingly returned to the venue it had known in 1669. It continued there for some time and, in 1724, the nine Presbyterian families from Hellingly to be mentioned in Bishop Bowers' visitation were, presumably, part of the congregation. Mrs. Luxford died in 1726. Under the terms of her husband's will Carters Corner became the property of his nephew Thomas, the son of Samuel Barton. There is no evidence to indicate whether the meeting continued after the death of Mrs Luxford, and the probability is that it may even have disappeared before the death of her cousin Chaloner Mills. His bequests to the five dissenting ministers, who were all centred in other Sussex locations may have been made not because they were visiting Hellingly, but because he had had to journey to these distant places, in order to attend Presbyterian meetings. Caplan suggested that, 'It looks as if the Presbyterian cause in Hellingly faded after about 1730.' (22)

Bishop Bowers' Visitation 1724

The final word on the size of the dissenting congregations for the early part of the century, comes from the Church of England. Bishop Bowers' 1724 Visitation included an enquiry into parochial population figures and an attempt to assess the numbers of Catholics and Dissenters living in each parish. (23) The assessments for parochial population are given overleaf:-

BISHOP BOWERS' VISITATION - NUMBER OF FAMILIES 1724

Alfriston - 53:	Arlington - 65:	Berwick - 21:
Chiddingly - 75:	Heathfield - 100:	Hellingly - 113:
Litlington - 19:	Lullington - 4:	Seaford - 70:
Waldron - 87:	Warbleton - 120:	West Dean - 8:

An attempt to assess the validity of Bowers' population figures is necessary, in order to decide whether his estimate of non-conformity is reliable. Burchall's comprehensive population study of Chiddingly parish has indicated that the 1724 figures for the total population are considerably lower than those arrived at by multiplying average annual baptismal totals by 30 - a method of estimating population at a given period recommended by Professor Hoskins. Burchall suggests, that using a multiplier of 4 Bowers' assessment of the population of Chiddingly would have produced a figure of 308, while the Hoskins' method gives a suggested total of 360.(24) Other considerations suggest that the 1724 figures are suspect. The population of Hellingly at 113 families appears to be very high, even though part of Hellingly parish did border very closely on Hailsham town which, although closed as a cattle market, appears to have continued as a centre of local trading. There is one further element in the Hellingly returns, which makes them extremely suspect. With a population of 113 families, it is incomprehensible that only four inhabitants should have been communicants - yet this is the figure given.

It is also surprising that Heathfield, another former

market town, which had the highest acreage of any of the Cuckmere parishes, apparently possessed a lower population than Warbleton, a much smaller parish. The Vicar of Heathfield, although an absentee, did have a very efficiently compiled tithe book, which should have helped him to make a fairly accurate assessment of the numbers in his parish who reaped some benefit from the produce of the land. (25)

The figures for the numbers of dissenters in Bowers' list are not so tidy as those for the entire population, and so are probably more suspect. Some returns gave the numbers of dissenting families and others the numbers of individual dissenters, and it is often difficult to tell whether families or individuals have been entered. The fault is with the questionnaire itself, which is vague on this point. (Fig.5) The required particulars concerned 'The number of families residing in the parish and if any papists how many Families, also if any Protestant dissenters, how many of them and of what sort.' On the whole, the detail of the returns suggest that an honest, if rather muddled, attempt at assessment was made, although it is evident that some incumbents and their advisors were not really in touch with the state of dissent in their parish. The list of Cuckmere dissenters in 1724 - according to Bowers' Visitation - is given overleaf. (26)

BISHOP BOWERS' VISITATION - DISSENTERS 1724

Alfriston - 2 never baptised, 2 Presbyterian widows
Arlington - 10 Presbyterian families.
Berwick - 1 Presbyterian family.
Chiddingly - 1 Presbyterian family, 1 Baptist family
Heathfield - 6 or 7 Anabaptist, 4 or 5 Presbyterian.
Hellingly - 9 Presbyterian, 3 Anabaptist, 1 Quaker.
Seaford - 3 Presbyterian.
Waldron - 4 Anabaptist, 5 Presbyterians.
Warbleton - Meeting of Presbyterians, 1 Quaker.
West Dean - 2 farmers Presbyterians.
No Papists recorded in any parish.
No Dissenters recorded in Litlington & Lullington.

Caplan has suggested that the 1724 returns underestimate the number of non-conformists, because local parsons could not distinguish between so-called conformists, who did not attend church and real dissenters, and may have thought that some non-conformists were indifferent members of his own church. (27) So the Bishop, who was interested in the number of dissenting families in each parish, may have been more complacent than he had cause to be. The Warbleton return, which stated that there was a Presbyterian meeting in the parish, was doubly suspect. Not only was the number of families not given but the denomination was also incorrect, for the meeting described as being of Presbyterians must have referred to the long-standing Baptist meeting, which was still centred in Warbleton at that time. No licence was issued for a Presbyterian meeting in Warbleton in the early eighteenth century.

If the returns sent to the Bishop's visitation, which

show dissenters living in ten out of the twelve Cuckmere parishes, are compared with those drawn up by Evans and Thompson, there appear to be enormous discrepancies, because the 1724 returns suggest that there was dissenting activity in more parishes than those named by Evans and Thompson. However, the fact that a dissenting family was domiciled in a certain parish did not necessarily mean that its members attended meetings in that parish, and many of the families noted above may have actually attended meetings elsewhere. Moreover, if a comparison is made between Bowers' list and the licenses issued by him, or his predecessor, the Bishop's returns tally quite well with those of Evans and Thompson. Bowers' assessment of ten Presbyterian families living in Arlington confirms the continued existence of this meeting mentioned by John Evans. Bowers also noted nine Presbyterian families in Hellingly; and all the Baptists mentioned in the Visitation, with the possible exception of the two people never baptised who were living in Alfriston, could have been members of the Warbleton Baptist meeting, which was described as Presbyterian..

There was, however, one meeting at the home of Stephen Pollington at Sutton in Seaford which escaped the notice of both Thompson and Evans. Perhaps this is because it was very small. Pollington had applied for a licence to hold a Presbyterian meeting in 1710. It certainly appears from the records of the Bishop's Visitation in 1724 that the remnants of a meeting, possibly attended by three families from Seaford, two farmers from West Dean and two widows from

Alfriston, was in a desperate state.

Beginnings of a Revival

When Thompson's list was updated in 1772 only two meetings were recorded near the Cuckmere - at Waldron and Heathfield. The denominations were not stated, but the number and venue tally with two licences granted by the Bishop during the latter half of the eighteenth century - both in 1770, after a gap of fifty years.(28) The licence for the meeting for Baptists in Waldron was issued to John Gosling, a fellmonger, whose family had long been representatives of the once powerful Warbleton Baptists. This group had declined sadly during the course of the century, and after some years of uncertainty it is evident from the Baptist records that the meeting was now centred at Waldron.(29)

No denomination was given for the meeting licensed in Heathfield in 1770 - it was described simply as a meeting of Protestant Dissenters and the licence was issued to Thomas Pattenden, a victualler, recently moved from Litlington, where he had occupied the premises now known as the *Plough and Harrow*.(30) One of the trustees of Pattenden's will was Samuel Drawbridge a known Baptist, so it is possible that this may have been an application for a new Baptist meeting. Alternatively, it may have been connected with a totally different movement. This had commenced in the 1760s and eventually inspired a great revival of nonconformity, which continued to spread during

the nineteenth century. The instigator was a man called George Gilbert.

George Gilbert

In general, nineteenth-century historians were fairly scathing about conditions in the Weald during the latter part of the eighteenth century, which was evidently 'notorious for the immorality and ignorance of the people.' The work of George Gilbert has often been regarded as innovative and historians have forgotten, or been unaware of the strong tradition of non-conformity which had existed in the area in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Born in Rotherfield in 1741 Gilbert joined the army and enlisted in Col. George Eliott's regiment of horse when he was eighteen. He roughed it through many campaigns in Germany, though his hardships must have been lessened by the fact that Eliott (himself a vegetarian and teetotaler) was particularly careful about the comfort of his troopers. It is probable that Gilbert may have accompanied Eliott on his expedition to Cuba in 1762. In 1763, when peace was declared, Gilbert returned to England 'a wild, reckless and immoral soldier.' He lived for a time in the midlands and it was there that he attended meetings of the Wesleyan Methodists. At first, he went to jeer, but gradually he became convinced of the truth of their cause. In 1767 he was stationed in London, where he himself conducted religious services in the barracks, and proved himself to be a fine speaker. (31)

By this time Eliott, his former commander, had been

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promoted to the rank of General and, in 1766, had purchased Bailey Park in Heathfield with the proceeds of the prize money he had received for capturing Havana in 1762. He enlarged this estate, by purchasing much of the waste of Heathfield Manor. (32) Evidently he employed regimental labour to enclose this land, and Gilbert obtained permission to join the group. He continued his evangelising work, causing great indignation among the local vestry, who asked the general to sack Gilbert. The General, who had already showed signs that he was not too keen on joining the local elite - he had sent a distinctly chilly letter to the Duke of Newcastle when Newcastle had attempted to co-opt him to the bench and had suggested that 'Camps are not the best school for Magistrates' - refused to send Gilbert away, pronouncing that he was, 'a good soldier and a worthy fellow.' (33)

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Unfortunately, Lower gives no references to authenticate his account of the difficulties which Gilbert encountered in Heathfield, but he wrote that Gilbert had to put up with considerable local derision, and that his persecutors 'attempted to malign his moral character' and when that failed 'they got up cricket matches when he was preaching out of doors, and used to upset his auditors by rushing amongst them to pick up the ball'. With the assistance of Lady Elliott, Gilbert obtained his discharge from the army. By this time he had moved from his position as a follower of the Wesleyan Methodists and eventually he

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became the leading Independent-Congregational minister in Sussex.(34) Wesleyanism, in fact, had never received a great following in Eastern Sussex, and it is generally considered that Wesley's antagonism towards smuggling was the cause, for smuggling in the eighteenth century was a very valuable bi-employment for a large section of the population.

Initially, Gilbert held meetings in his own house, but when the congregation became too large a barn was hired, and finally a small chapel was built. In time that chapel had to be replaced as it was too small to contain the growing congregation, and George Gilbert, 'a dissenting teacher', was given a grant of land on the waste of the Duke of Dorset's manor of Heathfield in 1786.(35)

Gilbert's mission did not end in Heathfield for he travelled very widely, preaching sometimes as far from Heathfield as Horsham or Cranbrook in Kent. His preaching diary, which covers the years 1784-5 shows that at Heathfield services were held on Sundays and also at mid-week. Although he held Calvinistic beliefs, he does not seem to have adopted a severe tone in his sermons. 'His selection of texts plainly was designed to support a simple and warm-hearted evangelical appeal.'(36)

Apart from his ministry at Heathfield, Gilbert also preached at Chiddingly and Alfriston in the lower Cuckmere, and he is associated with the revival of non-conformity in Alfriston, where 'he often preached from the Market Cross to large audiences.'(37) Proof that the revival had spread

to southern Cuckmere parishes appears in episcopal records, for in 1781 a licence to hold a meeting was granted to Edward May of Alfriston, and Gilbert was probably associated with this venture.(38) The new, larger, chapel called the Ebenezer Independent Chapel which was opened at Alfriston in 1801 may have owed something to Gilbert's preaching, but its foundation was connected, not with Gilbert, but with the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. This group was inspired by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, who had originally been greatly influenced by Wesley and Whitefield, but who later gave the title of 'Calvinistic Methodists' to the many chapels which she founded.(39)

Gilbert's story, as related by Lower, suggests that there was considerable local antipathy towards the dissenters, which provides an insight into neighbourhood relationships and into the lives of these earnest and dedicated people. However, it has been suggested elsewhere that by 1760 the dissenters were generally accepted as respectable and peaceable neighbours.(40) It is possible that Gilbert's evangelising provoked a situation that was contrary to the general rule. Nevertheless, Lower's article on Gilbert, even if it is slightly exaggerated, and the few details from his preaching diary add a new dimension to the history of non-conformity. Such details - apart from an occasional hint given in a will or an inventory - are rarely to be found in official records. It is, therefore, vital to turn to the dissenters' own records to

discover something of their beliefs and sufferings, in order
to investigate the social conditions in which they lived.

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CHAPTER X

THE EVIDENCE OF QUAKER AND BAPTIST RECORDS

Limitations

Although the records kept by Quakers living near the Cuckmere Valley are - compared with the records of other dissenters - remarkably full for the period 1660-1750, they are not without their problems. There are two main volumes. The first is the *Book of Sufferings*, which runs from 1655-1750. In this book the pagination is confused. On two occasions, in 1702 and in 1736, the folios are retrogressively numbered. The second volume is the *Minute Book* of the Eastern Sussex Meeting, dated 1669-1707, but which carries the information 'The West Family began this book in 1674'. This suggests that entries pre-dating 1674 were made at a later date. In the text of the volume it is recorded that at a meeting held at Oteham (near Hailsham) in May 1681, 'it is ordered by this meeting that it be recorded the time of establishing the generall monthly meeting at the East part of the County of Sussex which was first held at the house of Sam Webb in Alfriston 10/2/1681,' yet combined monthly meetings of the groups from Warbleton, Alfriston, Hailsham and other places in the neighbourhood had been consistently held and minuted in the volume from 1669. It is possible that these records may have been edited at some time. Although small local meetings were held by the Society of Friends no evidence of their proceedings has survived.

Baptist records are even more sparse and there is no information about Cuckmere local meetings. There are, however the minutes of the regional meeting of the Kent and Sussex General Baptist Association, and the edited Minutes of the General Baptist Association, which dictated national policy and so influenced the lives of Baptists living in the Cuckmere Valley. Obviously the Quaker records are fuller and provide more colourful details and these run from 1669 until the middle of the eighteenth century. Baptist records do not commence until 1704 and documentation until 1780 is reasonably good, but even in 1704, if the minutes reflect conditions truthfully, the Baptist movement in the Cuckmere area was already in decline. There is no information from non-conformist records about the years when the cause was at its peak.

Neighbours as Foreigners

Although the strength of non-conformity estimated in official surveys taken during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may have been underestimated, the figures suggest that even if their numbers had been correctly counted, dissenters would still have constituted a large minority. The figures compiled for the Compton Census of 1676 show that, in the Cuckmere Valley, there was roughly one dissenter to every fifteen conformists. In Cambridgeshire, according to the same census, there were between 4% and 5% of nonconformists, which was typical of the country as a whole; it seems that the number of dissenters in the Cuckmere Valley was above the national average.(1)

Although the exact figures for Bishop Bowers' 1724 visitation are difficult to assess correctly, the ratio of dissenters to members of the established church was, at the highest estimate, about one in twelve.(2) Like many isolated counties - and the state of the roads was an isolating factor - Sussex had a reputation for being xenophobic. Although dissenters were not foreigners in a spatial sense, they were in a spiritual sense. From 1660 their religious ideals set them apart from their neighbours.

It has been shown that during the period 1650-1659 Quakers throughout the country had aroused hostility and fear among all classes of society.(3) Their ideas and behaviour had gradually alienated them from their fellow countrymen. Their insistence on their spiritual relationship with Christ, their trembling and shaking during moments of religious ecstasy and their militant proselytizing, had set them apart. Although longer established, the Baptists were less aggressive than Quakers and their behaviour - except for their practice of baptising adults by total immersion in 'living water' - was less obviously eccentric. Even so, their puritanism was extreme in a country which after 1660 returned to the mild puritanism adopted by the established church, and consequently they must have been viewed with suspicion by their fellows. The church encouraged such suspicion and an additional source of local friction would have derived from the open hostility which existed between Quakers and

Baptists; often deliberately provoked by one sect or the other. (4) Even in Warbleton (where the leading Quaker family, the Ellises, had been in residence at least since 1580) and in other Cuckmere parishes, such as Hellingly and Arlington which had been indoctrinated by puritan ministers, religious differences must have put a strain on neighbourhood relationships.

The Fight for Survival

After 1660 both Quakers and Baptists had to fight for survival. The militancy of the Society of Friends had been subdued by the events of 1659. At the Restoration Quakers, owing to their refusal to swear the oath of allegiance, were regarded as opponents of the monarchy. (5) The religious settlement of 1662 forced them and other dissenters into isolation and caused great suffering among their followers. As there are no Baptist records for the Cuckmere at this early period, it is necessary to rely solely on those of the Society of Friends when considering the possible relationship of dissenters and conformists. Apart from the story about George Gilbert's treatment at the hands of the Heathfield vestry, quoted in the previous chapter, little is known about the way in which Baptists and Independents were regarded locally.

The evidence from Quaker records suggests that, in the Cuckmere Valley, suffering was caused mainly by clergy and local government officials. The *Book of Sufferings* shows that, in Lewes, Quaker meetings were disrupted and Friends were abominably treated by fellow townsfolk. On one

occasion, two constables and two churchwardens 'with many others of the baser sort of people' disrupted a meeting three times. Having attacked the speaker 'in a most violent manner' they hurled Friends to the ground and pulled them out of doors, completing their day's sport by beating an aged Friend in the stomach.(6) The use of the *Book of Sufferings* as a source for the treatment of Quakers has other problems - the chief of these being its undoubted bias. Not only did the Friends emphasize and rejoice in their sufferings, they were also extremely biased in their attitude to officialdom of any kind. The book contains frequent references to 'so-called' justices, all of whom are presented as being wicked men. There is a section in which the misfortunes of quaker persecutors are maliciously related. The members of the Society of Friends do not appear to have believed in turning the other cheek. This surprising attitude - possibly a survival of their earlier militancy - has the advantage that it counteracts the obvious bias of the *Book of Sufferings*. Because the authors of the book lost no opportunity to relate crimes committed against Friends, their silence could be regarded as evidence for lack of violence. There is no record that the 'baser sort of people' in the Cuckmere Valley were as harsh in their dealings with the Quakers as the Lewes townsfolk, except in the course of official duties as bailiff or constable, though, no doubt, the Friends' own strong ideals and behavioural quirks created a barrier

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between the two groups.

There seems to have been no attempt by magnate landowners to refuse tenancies to members of the Society of Friends. The Rickmans of Hellingly, besides owning some land of their own, rented a farm which was Pelham property. Jeremiah Ellis of Warbleton, also a landowner in his own right, rented Iwood farm from the trustees of Smith's Charity and at Lullington John Brooke was the tenant of Sir William Thomas. Quakers were always strictly honest in their business dealings and, no doubt, gained a reputation as reliable tenants. However, when landowners acted in their official capacity as justices their attitude to Quakers was rather different.

Between the years 1661 and 1689, in the country as a whole, about twelve thousand Friends suffered imprisonment and more than three hundred died in prison.(7) Cuckmere Quakers were among those who were imprisoned. Since their meetings were illegal, these were often interrupted and erring Quakers were arrested and taken before magistrates who tendered the oath of allegiance, and 'because for conscience sake they could not swear', sent them to Horsham jail, where they remained until the assizes.(8). Often a considerable period elapsed before the assizes took place. In 1664 John Ellis of Warbleton was committed to prison on the fifth of June, and tried at the sessions in Lewes. He, and others, were told that, 'their goods and chattells were forfeited to the King for ever and their lands and tenements during life and their Bodies to be Imprisoned dureing the

King's Pleasure.' Although it appears that the judge may not have been in earnest, some of these men remained in prison for five years.(9) In 1666 Offington Elphick, Thomas Banks and other members of the Alfriston meeting 'being at a peaceable meeting of the Friends of Truth at Allfriston, wateing upon the Lord... was taken thence and had before... two justices' who committed them to Horsham jail Horsham for three months.(10)

The Tithe Battle

The indictment and punishment of Quakers who held illicit meetings was mainly a secular affair and has been discussed in a previous chapter. Quakers were also involved in a struggle with the ecclesiastical authorities. They refused to pay church tax, for they did not attend 'the steeple house' and saw no reason why they should contribute to its upkeep, or to that of the people who attended. In 1667 Elias Ellis, 'for the sum of two shillings and elevenpence demanded for repairing the steeple house of Warbleton was sent to prison... and soe continued prisoner above two years.' In 1675 the churchwardens were still presenting Elias because, among other things, he would not pay his church tax.(11)

The chief point at issue, however, was the Quakers' refusal to pay tithes. The tithe battle was particularly fierce in Warbleton, where the indomitable Ellises headed a large group and where the incumbent was the rector and entitled to both great and small tithes. It was suggested

in Chapter III that Richard Weller, the rector of Warbleton in 1660 who was appointed during the interregnum, may well have been a puritan at heart although he conformed in 1662, but the ideals of Friends clashed with those of other puritans and even before that date, Weller had instigated the war against the non-tithe-paying Quaker population, a war which was to continue until the early years of the eighteenth century, when most of the Warbleton Quakers had either died or moved to Lewes.

In June 1661 Abraham Cruttenden, the tenant farmer at one of the most fertile farms in Warbleton 'had taken from him for tithes by Richard Weller ... four milch kine worth £19, one pair of oxen worth £12 10s, and forty lambs and sheep worth £15, a mare worth £5 10s' in all according to the *Book of Sufferings* valued at £250. These beasts were taken in lieu of three years arrears of tithes. The farm had previously been assessed at 54s a year. 'Besides the said Abraham was for the same cause imprisoned by the same priest in Horsham Goale twelve weeks...' (12) Although it is difficult to balance the total sum which Friends state was taken from Cruttenden with the individual prices of the stock, there is little doubt that, in comparison with former payments for the farm, he was grossly over-charged. This seems always to have been the case. In the same year, John Ellis, later to be in trouble with the secular arm for attending an illicit meeting, was 'sued at the Law and cast into prison for tithes by Richard Weller... where he continued near a quarter of a year, and then for the value

of about £12 demanded by the said Weller, he caused to be taken from ... John Ellis goods to the value of fifty pounds and upwards.' (13)

Three months' imprisonment for non-payment of tithes seems to have been the penalty normally imposed - that is, if the offender had sufficient stock for the parson to distrain against him, so that he could be recompensed. Sometimes the parson was not able to capitalise on the venture. In 1670 James West, a bucketmaker of Warbleton, was imprisoned for non-payment of tithes. Later that year he was discharged by order of Parson Weller's lawyer, since he had answered the writ brought against him. (14) However he was again imprisoned and by spring 1671 had already spent at least six months in gaol. When he finally appeared at the assizes 'the priest had judgement against him for about £7, which was levied upon the goods of the said James West, for which was taken two cows, not worth much more.' (15) In the case of those who did not possess distrainable stock, the prison sentence was more severe and might even prove fatal. In 1666 William James of Hellingly 'was sent to prison for Tithes by John Smith priest of the same parish ... and soe remained prisoner untill his death about two years and upwards.' (16) There is no mention of stock being taken from James, and this was, presumably, the reason for his lengthy term in prison.

In spite of the severe penalties exacted for non-payment of tithes - which in one case at least resulted in

death, the Society of Friends was adamant that tithes should not be paid. To Friends the payment of tithes amounted to supporting a ministry which they despised and wanted to abolish, and imprisonment and even death were considered preferable. Those who paid tithes suffered from the wrath of their fellows. In March 1669, at the East Sussex monthly meeting of Friends, William Tyshurst of Heathfield who had evidently paid his tithes, was admonished by John Ellis and John Newnham of Warbleton, 'by order of Friends'. In the downland parish of Lullington, John Brook was censured in 1676. (17)

The battle of the tithes continued. One Warbleton parson after another sued recalcitrant Friends. Anthony Nethercott, instituted in 1683, demanded excessive payments in the same way as his predecessor, even when the justices had agreed the amount due. In 1689 he asked Jeremiah Ellis, son of John Ellis, to pay nine shillings per annum for five years tithes, when only eight shillings had been allowed by the judge. Two bailiffs 'Nicholas Cheseman and Thomas King ...came with a sequestration and took from ... Jeremiah Ellis four oxen worth £22 and never returned anything again.' (18) In 1701, Roger Callow, the next Warbleton rector made even more excessive demands. He wanted £20 for two years tithe from Jeremiah Ellis, who was by this time farming a larger farm. Callow sent an attorney and three bailiffs to drive away six oxen, worth £42. Nothing was returned. (19) The vendetta against Quakers for the payment of their tithes, by a succession of

Warbleton rectors, doubtless exerted considerable influence on parishioners and may account for the apparent animosity with which churchwardens and constables in Warbleton presented Quakers for non-attendance at church, for living together without canonical marriage and for minor civil offences. (20)

In Alfriston, the other Cuckmere parish which fostered a large Quaker meeting, persecution by the parsons was not so noticeable, because the great tithes had been impropriated. This was also the case in most other parishes occupied by Quakers. It does not mean that Friends were not sued for tithes due, but that their persecution was deflected into lay hands. One of the chief sufferers in the lower valley was Moses French - a son-in-law of John Ellis of Warbleton. For many years he farmed at Oteham near Hailsham, and the Eastern Sussex monthly meetings were frequently held at his house. Later, he rented farms in Alfriston, Lullington and Litlington before moving to Warbleton, where he died in 1708. (21) In 1694 he rented about fifty-two acres of land in Litlington from Mrs. Bridgett Culpepper of Sevenoaks, Kent, for a year, but at harvest time William Blackman and Henry Bean (both inhabitants of Litlington, who were impropriators of the great tithes) 'took away in wheat, barley, oats pease and teares ... to the value of £6 13s 7d for tithes... it being about the summe demanded.' (22) The same year William Hurst the rector of Litlington took a pig, worth half a crown, for

his tithes. Moses was fortunate for in Arlington, in the same year, James Baker of Milton Street, had been deprived of the same five crops to the value of £17 10s 0d, on sixty-three acres of land. The impropriator in this case was William Stapley, and the account in the *Book of Sufferings* carries a memorandum to the effect that, 'William Stapely is since dead, who lay about a quarter of a year hardly able to help himself and lay cursing and swearing till near his end.' (23) This was apparently considered a just end for his greed. Moses French, however, was also to suffer under the Stapleys. In 1697 Widow Stapley demanded £5 15s 0d for tithes on ten acres of meadow, which he rented from her. (24)

In Hellingly the Rickman family suffered continually during the first half of the eighteenth century. In this parish some sequestered animals were returned, but the money realised from the sale of others always exceeded the cost of unpaid tithes. In 1739 Joseph Rickman, who farmed in Wartling and Hellingly, was deprived of stock valued at over £87, and the stock taken ranged from fat sheep and steers to wheat. The following year his neighbour, William Dann, who seems to have been a bailiff, took 'without any warrant or other lawful authority, seven fat oxen orth £47 and drove or sent them to Smithfield and sold them and paid the tithes.' (25) Dann distrained on Rickman for several years and, since he was a neighbour, it appears in this case, that relations cannot have been too happy. After 1743 there are no further references to Rickman in the *Book of Sufferings*. He died in 1748, but his two sons continued to farm in

Hellingly and the family attended the new Friends Meeting House at Gardner Street in Herstmonceux for many years. (26)

Discipline

Among dissenters of all sects discipline was enormously important. The foundation of a new sect usually sprang from an attempt to introduce a return to purity in religious thought and in morals. In the Society of Friends erring brothers and sisters were sought out by elders, questioned, reasoned with, persuaded and rebuked. The repercussions of misdemeanour could be lengthy. Disciplinary meetings were regularly held. These were attended not only by members of the local monthly meeting, but also by members of other groups. Disciplinary meetings of the Eastern Sussex Quakers were frequently visited by members from Lewes. Yet to members of the established church Quakers often appeared to be without morals. When Elias Ellis married Mary Mittell in 1673, the ceremony, according to quaker custom, took place in his father's house. (27) The following year the couple were indicted by the churchwardens, 'We present Elias Ellis and Mary Mittell who cohabit together as man and wife, not being lawfully married as we know of.' (28) Yet according to the Archer Judgement of 1661, quaker marriages were legal. (29) The couple had given notice at two successive meetings of their intention to marry and their freedom to do so had been thoroughly investigated by members of the meeting. Elias was, of course, particularly militant and unyielding in his attitude towards the

established church, and this may be the reason why the rector and his underlings continued to present him and his wife for unlawful cohabitation. When he died in 1706 Elias thought it necessary to stress the legality of his marriage, lest his will should be misconstrued. He wrote 'I make my wife Mary (daughter of Thomas Mittell of Warbleton deceased) now Mary Ellis my wife, my whole executor...' (30)

Some Friends, faced with the possibility of a barrage of obscenity from members of the established church, decided to be married according to the rites of that church. This was regarded with the greatest abhorrence by their fellows. Samuel Webb, a tailor of Alfriston, was married by in church. Although this marriage does not appear in the Alfriston parish register, it was recorded, with another Quaker marriage, in the Bishop's transcripts and a note was appended, 'The persons are married but wee know (not) of licences or banes asked.' (31) At a meeting held on 11th March 1669, Offington Elphick and Moses French were deputed by Friends to speak to Samuel Webb about being married by a priest. In 1681 Friends averred that James Vine, who had also been married by a priest, had been led 'into a dark anti-christian way.' Friends truly believed themselves to be the only followers of true Christianity. (32)

Since quaker marriages were regarded as invalid by the Church of England, it is not surprising to find that, on occasion, a quaker couple would dispense with any form of ceremony. In July 1680 John Newnham, a widowed yeoman of Warbleton and Martha Diplock were accused by Friends of

living together before marriage, 'contrary to the order of friends.' As was normally the case, members of the meeting were deputed to speak to them about it. The Newnhams were a troublesome couple. John reneged on an agreement made with James West about letting his farm and Friends finally persuaded him to pay West twelve shillings and sixpence to 'wholly satisfy both parties.' Martha Newnham, possibly upset by the row about her marriage, 'spoke slightingly of friends.' She was summoned to appear at the next monthly meeting to 'declare what she hath to charge any member with, so that the matter may be judged and no evil scirmising may remain uncondemned.' Quakers always listened to evidence from both parties in an argument and in this case their final judgement was delayed, because Martha often failed to attend meetings to which she was summoned in order to answer accusations. The affair dragged on for two years, but eventually Martha was prevailed upon to sign a deposition, witnessed by her husband, to the effect that she had seen the error of her ways and desired the Lord and Friends to forgive her. (33)

At this period, during 1680 and the years following, members of the Eastern Sussex meeting also dealt with other miscreants. William Tyshurst of Heathfield had indulged 'some evil passion in fighting', but it was Thomas Banks, a tailor of Alfriston, who had recently donated land for the burial ground in that town, who caused the greatest concern. As a devout Quaker, he had been imprisoned for his faith,

and had been presented by Alfriston churchwardens for not being married, for not having his children baptised, and for refusing to pay church tax. (34) But Thomas had a drink problem. So, Samuel Webb, another Alfriston tailor, was deputed to speak to him about it and Thomas told Samuel that he hoped to take more care in the future. This did not satisfy the meeting. A letter was written to Thomas suggesting that he had been drinking 'more than was meet' and that this had given outsiders 'occasion to speak evil of friends' and, what was worse, had 'brought a waite and burden upon friends that one soe long Convinced of God's blessed and everlasting truth should walk so unworthy of it.'

It is clear that Friends were extremely concerned about Thomas's fall from grace. For several years they, and members of the Lewes meeting, continued to admonish and reason with him. In June 1681 he signed a paper to the effect that 'through the instigation of Evil company and my owne neglect in keeping stedfast upon ye wach againste the Adversary of many sowles', he had drunk to excess, and that he hoped never to offend again. The habit was difficult to cure. Three years later, in March 1684, it was reported that Thomas Banks had been overcome with beer or brandy. Before any disciplinary action could be taken by Friends a misfortune occurred, which may have had a sobering effect. In June the same year, both he and Samuel Webb suffered from 'loss by a sudane fire' and both applied to Friends for assistance, which was granted, Thomas being the recipient of

£5. Possibly because of the fire, he moved to Lullington, where he was presented in 1685 for not attending church. (35) There are no further references to his drinking habits.

Frequently the so-called crimes committed by Quakers were simply the result of their antipathy to the Church of England. In the case of Thomas Banks there was no doubt that he had been guilty of excessive drinking, a habit condemned by Quakers and members of the established church. The Quakers had been concerned for Thomas' spiritual welfare and by the opportunities for criticism it had given their opponents. Another backslider, James West, a bucket-maker from Warbleton, provided them with a different kind of problem. Like Thomas Banks, James West had suffered for his faith. He been imprisoned for non-payment of tithes and presented and excommunicated for non-attendance at church. In 1681 he had been absent from monthly meetings and when questioned, he claimed that he had been slandered and abused. He had been reported as fathering a base-born child. He denied the charge and said he was being blackmailed by the child's mother. He demanded a fair hearing and to be cleared of scandal. According to Quaker custom, two members of the women's meeting were deputed to speak to the mother, who stated, 'It is James West's child and no mans else'. However, the women added to their report 'we can give but little credit to her sayings, because she first said to the contrary.'

James West was probably also being pursued by

churchwardens and overseers for a contribution towards the upkeep of the child, and this may have influenced the advice given by Quakers. First, however, they were anxious to have some re-assurance that West was innocent of the charge. They decided to advise James 'if he be a clean man in relation to ye said woman ... that he doe then bare his Testimony against ye said bad woman and not pay or allow anything to or towards ye maintenance of her or her Base Born Child, but rather to bare what ye law inflicts on him. But if not clean to confess it.' (36) To them, the most important thing was that he should speak the truth. Whether he was guilty was of minor importance, but having spoken the truth it was essential that he should not be bullied by the woman or the church authorities into paying for the maintenance of a child not his own. This would have been tantamount to supporting the Church of England. If he had spoken the truth, he had nothing to fear. It would have been preferable for him to go to prison, even though wrongly accused. Whether James was guilty or not was never proven, but he agreed to pay towards the maintenance of the child and Friends commented, 'the which proceeding and action we do utterly disown.' (37) Clearly, Friends believed that James West was innocent.

The maintenance of discipline was as important to the General Baptists as it was to the Quakers, and one of the qualifications required of their Messengers was that they should 'exhort that Christian discipline be maintained according to the scriptures.' (38) The paucity of Baptist

records makes it impossible to discover how members were counselled or reprimanded at a local level. It is possible, however, to learn about discipline at a distance, for the decisions of the General Assembly and of the regional Kent and Sussex Association concerning behaviour were sometimes recorded. At a meeting of the Kent and Sussex Association held at Biddenden in March 1711 it was decreed that it was neither expedient nor lawful for church members to take part in card playing or dancing.(39) At a meeting of the General Assembly in June 1732 a very great decay of holiness and piety among members was noted and the recommendation was made that family worship and the catechising of children should be encouraged. The following year a motion opposing the mixed singing of psalms as 'wholly unwarrantable' was passed, and although such singing was not wholly condemned, most Baptist meetings remained songless for many years.(40) Although these snippets provide scant evidence regarding living conditions among Baptists, they do suggest that frivolity of any kind was discouraged and that Baptists were anxious to counteract the general eighteenth-century falling off in moral standards.

Charity

It was not lack of charity which caused the Quakers to advise James West to ignore the pleas for maintenance made by the mother of the illegitimate child. It was their strong antipathy to being manipulated by parochial

officials. Among their own kind they were very ready to supply monetary assistance to those who were in need.

Thomas Banks and Samuel Webb were assisted after the fire had damaged their property in Alfriston, and in 1703 members of the Warbleton meeting made a collection towards Friends in Hampshire who suffered from a fire at Fording-bridge. (41)

Payments to poor Quakers were organised by the monthly meeting. In May 1667 five shillings and sixpence was paid to the Alfriston meeting 'for the relief of Edward Bray.' Friends bequeathed money in their wills for the assistance of their poorer brethren. In 1685 bequests from John Ellis and Abraham Waterhouse were noted in the *Minute Book*. (42) In 1708 Moses French bequeathed money 'to be disposed of for charitable purposes among poor Quakers,' and in 1697 when John Baker of the Alfriston meeting left £5 to poor Friends, fifty shillings was given to the poor of Lewes and fifty shillings to the poor of the monthly meeting at Alfriston. Yet not all the beneficiaries were members of the Alfriston meeting, though most were. Those who benefited included Mary Hilton 'being Lame and Poor' - ten shillings; Widow Adams - five shillings; Elizabeth Banks - five shillings; and Widow Curde - fifteen shillings. (43)

Widow Curde's distress had already been noted by Friends who, in 1693, had suggested that members from Warbleton should 'take care for a dwelling' for her. Elizabeth Curde lived in Dallington - a neighbouring parish to Warbleton - and was a member of the Warbleton meeting,

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but a later entry in the *Minute Book* suggests that finding somewhere for her to live had proved a problem. It was noted that 'there is not a place yett provided for her, soe ye former desire or order is continued.' It is not known whether Friends from Warbleton ever provided a home for her, but she was supported until the end of her life. Later in 1693 she received £3 from money bequeathed to Friends by Abraham Waterhouse, and in 1697 she received a further £10. In 1699 another payment was made to her, and in 1702 she received five shillings and sixpence. Elizabeth Curde was buried in the Quaker burial ground in Warbleton on the 28th December 1702. (44)

Both burial grounds - one in Warbleton and the other in Alfriston - had been donated by Friends. They became another charity to which Quakers bequeathed money. In 1708 Jeremiah Ellis, last surviving son of John Ellis who had given the ground, bequeathed £6 to Thomas Beard of the Cliff near Lewes 'on condition that he shall repair the burying place belonging to the people called Quakers in Warbleton...' (45) In 1682 the Alfriston burial ground was remembered by William French, husbandman of Alfriston, who left £1 towards its repair, and although this was a small sum and French's executors had received a warrant for tithes from Robert Nurth, the vicar of Alfriston, who had taken a brass kettle worth £12 from the goods of the deceased as his due, in 1686 an entry in the *Minute Book* mentioned that William French had left twenty shillings towards the repair

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of the ground and that W. Wade had left a legacy to the meeting, so £5 15s 2d was spent on new fencing, and the remainder was kept in hand. (46)

Although Quakers were biased and even vindictive about their treatment by church authorities, when dealing with their own people they were always strictly honest and impartial, and if opinions were divided they took pains to ensure that the will of the majority should prevail. Jeremiah Ellis's bequest exemplifies this attitude. His instructions to Thomas Beard regarding the burial ground were amplified, for he added, 'and if he shall not think fit to lay out all the said £6 in the repairing of the said burying place then... he shall come to the monthly meeting ... and bestow the remainder of such money as shall not be expended unto such poor people as the major part of the meeting shall think be in want.'

There is no record to show how Baptists at local meetings administered funds provided for their poor or sick, but such funds must have existed, even if no general collection was made, for Baptists did leave provision for the poor in their wills. John Grover, mercer of Heathfield left money to the elders and deacons of Warbleton meeting towards 'the Reliefe of their poore,' and James Wimble an ironfounder of Waldron left eight shillings 'to be used to buy wheate and make bread for the poor of Waldron' on the day of his funeral. (47) Money raising was one of the activities promoted by the General Assembly and in 1710 it was laid down that there should be a collector in each

church, that members should make a weekly contribution - from which some money, presumably, went to the local church - and that they should also make a yearly remittance to the Assembly. (48)

American Commitments

A great deal of Baptist money was channelled into providing funds towards the support of Messengers both in England and in America, and it appears that the support of this latter venture was one of their favourite charities, even though it clearly had a stultifying effect on the Baptist churches in England. The General Assembly and the Kent and Sussex Association were devoted to the ideal of sending Messengers and missions to America, but this devotion was not always matched on a local level. There is evidence to indicate that this policy did not meet with the approval of the large Warbleton meeting, which suffered from it and also from the fact that several messengers were recruited from the group. Messengers, once ordained, ceased to be identified solely with the meeting which had nurtured them. An elected Messenger was responsible for a wide area, and had to travel round the country to supervise other meetings which were in need of guidance - some of them a long distance from home. This practice had a debilitating effect on local churches.

One of the first entries from the Minutes of the General Baptist Assembly mentions the fact that in 1697 Robert Norden's name had been put forward as a potential

Messenger.(49) Norden, an inhabitant of Waldron, was an elder of the Warbleton church. He was obviously respected in the neighbourhood and was called upon to witness many wills. His election took many years to finalise. It was still not decided in 1711 and by this time another elder from the Warbleton meeting had also been selected for the position. This was Henry Miller, who lived in Hellingly. At a meeting of the Kent and Sussex association held at Biddenden in March 1711 it was reported that, 'the church of Warbleton to whom the said brethren doth belong did give their free Assent and Consent to their said Choice and... they had elected another Elder.'(50) It is evident from the minutes of this and later meetings that neither Norden or Miller had been over-enthusiastic about their selection. They had suggested and it had been agreed that other members should be approached. However, the other prospective candidates proved even less anxious to be elected. A brother from Sevenoaks would not give a satisfactory answer, and the Ditchling meeting had offered several reasons why their Brother Webb would not be a suitable candidate. These were, they said, the weakness of his body; the greatness of his family and the greatness of his business and his worldly concerns.(51) Robert Norden agreed to offer himself as a Messenger. The following year there were reverberations from Warbleton. A letter from that meeting was read at the assembly of the Kent and Sussex Association enquiring 'what number will be supposed a competent supply of messengers?' The minutes are brief,

but it is possible that the Warbleton meeting was protesting because they had lost two of their elders in a very short space of time.

There is no direct evidence for the ordination of Norden or Miller, although arrangements for this event were made at the meeting of the Kent & Sussex Association, but they appear to have fallen through. At the next general assembly of the Baptists, held on the 30th March 1714, the two men were both entered as Representatives of Warbleton, yet their ordination must have taken place, for Robert Norden was chosen to lead a mission to Virginia. Evidently objections were expected from the Warbleton church, for two brothers were deputed to go to Warbleton in order to 'endeavour to remove the difficulties with the congregation on Brother Norden's account.' (52) The provisions of the will of John Grover, member of the Warbleton meeting suggest that the meeting did not view Norden's forthcoming departure with approbation. Grover left £4 a year to Norden, providing 'he continue to serve the church in the capacity of an elder.' (53) On the 19th May 1714 the General Assembly decided that a letter should be sent to several churches 'to stir them up for assistance for Robert Norden and Thomas White who were appointed and approved by the Assembly to go to Virginia to propagate the Gospel of truth.' (54) Robert Norden and Thomas White sailed for Virginia in 1714, but White died on the voyage. Other missionaries were sent out the following year, but it was

very difficult for the Kent and Sussex Association to provide financial support for them. (55) The missionary venture proved a burden to the General Baptists as a whole, and also had the effect of weakening local meetings, which suffered from the loss of talented elders.

For several years after the departure of Norden, Henry Miller, Messenger, represented the Warbleton church at meetings of the Kent and Sussex Association and at the general assembly. He also travelled widely in his capacity as Messenger, but he was still domiciled in Hellingly. Norden's mission to Virginia caused concern. In 1716 at a meeting of the Kent and Sussex Association it was agreed 'on reading of Brother Norden's letter that it is the duty of churches to send more assistance for the carrying on of the work in Virginia.' (56) In 1718 the Association agreed that Brother Norden should be invited home, 'according to his request, providing another fit person can be obtained to supply his place in the work of the gospel.' (57) In spite of frequent resolutions to secure Norden's release and collections to provide him with support and comfort he was still in America in 1725, when it was agreed that he 'be sent home from Virginia, if he be disposed to return.' (58) Robert Norden appears to have been more dedicated and selfless than other able members of the Baptist church. His commitment was particularly strong and he does not appear to have received much support from the Baptists in England once he had reached Virginia, although there was a great deal of talk about helping him, and the Kent and Sussex Association

admitted that it had been guilty of 'several inadvertencies and mismanagements', with regard to the mission. (59) There are no further references to Norden in the Baptist records after 1726, when it was again agreed that he should be invited to come home, and there is no proof that he did return. However at a meeting of the General Assembly in 1733 it was agreed, in answer to a letter received from Warbleton, that the yearly collections made by churches belonging to the Assembly 'shall be remitted to be applied for the relief of Poor Ministers and the Improvement of gifted brethren.' (60) By this time yet another elder from the Warbleton meeting, Robert Mercer, a son-in-law of Henry Miller, had been ordained as Messenger - after more than one request had been made to the Warbleton congregation, who clearly felt that they had done more than enough towards supplying Messengers for the Baptist cause. (61)

Departure from the Cuckmere

There is little doubt that the removal of their most talented members as Messengers - in Norden's case overseas - had the effect of weakening the Baptist church in Warbleton. Although another of their leaders, John Gosling, a fellmonger from Waldron, was chosen to be a Messenger by the General Assembly in 1743, the meeting was clearly in decline and on several occasions had not sent a representative to the General Assembly. (62) This decline is reflected in the parish registers of Waldron and Warbleton. Between 1732 and 1738 seven adult members of the Mitten family, whose

forebears had obtained one of the first licences to hold a Baptist meeting in 1692, were baptised in Warbleton parish church. At Waldron church in 1721 Ann Siggs was baptised 'in the twenty-second year of her age, being born of Anabaptist Parents.' Two years later Mary Reader, aged thirty, also born of Anabaptist parents, was similarly received into the established church. (63)

The decline continued and by 1753 the administrators of the Kent and Sussex Association had become so confused that they referred to the meeting as 'Warbleton alias Walden.' The confusion spread to the General Assembly. With the election of John Gosling as elder, the centre of the once-powerful Warbleton meeting had moved to Waldron, and although Gosling died in 1765, his son - another John Gosling - applied for a faculty to hold a meeting at a 'house lately erected for that purpose.' (64) No mention of Warbleton is made in the minutes of the General Assembly after 1775. (65)

In 1771 the General Assembly had agreed that 'out of an affecting sense of decay and declension of religion ...amongst us' a day of fasting and prayer should be observed. (66) At this time Henry Edwards from Ditchling was the representative of the Waldron meeting at the General Assembly, and by the end of the century the motivating force of the General Baptists seems to have moved to that town. John Burgess of Ditchling, who later emigrated to America, had been raised in Waldron and had been associated with John Gosling the fellmonger. On several occasions he

represented the Waldron church at the General Assembly; but by 1784 Burgess had moved to Ditchling and with his departure the activities of the Waldron church ceased for a time, but were revived in the nineteenth century. (67)

The Baptists survived in the Cuckmere far longer than the Quakers. The Quaker *Minute Book* of the Eastern Sussex meeting ends early in 1708. By this time many of the leading Quakers in Alfriston and in Warbleton had died - Elias Ellis in 1706, and his brother Jeremiah and brother-in-law Moses French in 1708. (68) In 1709 a new trust deed for the Warbleton burial ground was made which shows that younger members of the Ellis family had moved to Lewes, where many Quakers had congregated. (69) Although the burial ground continued to be used, and the Rickman family still lived at Hellingly, most of the representatives of the Society of Friends had departed from the Cuckmere by the end of the first decade in the eighteenth century, but a fitting memorial for them had already been written by one of their most ardent elders.

In the preamble to his will Elias Ellis, defiant and single-minded to the end, expressed the beliefs which had been the motivation of his life, 'My Body Soul and Spirit I have given unto the Lord with which they have glorified God, for they are all the Lord's and have long been given up to him...and I die in the Lord in whom I have lived and moved and had my being a true and reall protestant Christian and member of the true reformed church...of which church Christ

Jesus was and is the holy head and husband, mediator,
redeemer and saviour and no Pope nor false christian by whom
I have been a great sufferer for bearing a true testimony to
the Lord's blessed holy name in whom I rest.' (70)

CHAPTER X - REFERENCES - THE EVIDENCE OF QUAKER
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CHAPTER XI

PRIVATE CHARITY AND PUBLIC CHEESEPARING

Small Help from the Clergy

'His reliefe to the poore is small ... and yet our poore is greate'. Thus wrote the churchwardens of Warbleton in 1639.(1) They were complaining about their absentee Rector, against whom they had several grievances, one of which was that the parsonage should have been more highly valued in the assessment for the poor rate.(2) Their presentment emphasizes a problem which related directly to the care of the poor during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. 'His reliefe to the poore is small,' - this was true not just of the rector of Warbleton in 1630 but of most of the clerics in the Cuckmere Valley between 1660 and 1780. It related not only to financial contributions, but also to support of any kind.

The 1601 Poor Law Act placed the onus of caring for the poor on the parish - especially on the churchwardens and overseers. Decisions concerning the poor were normally taken at a meeting of the vestry. The chairman of the vestry was - or should have been - the incumbent.(3) The incumbent, too, was the one man in the parish who should, by the nature of his office, have been concerned with problems of charity and poverty and social distress. Yet it is probable that Cuckmere parsons (like their fellows elsewhere in the country) did not usually concern themselves with the poor, even though many of them, considering their status, were not well off themselves. Vestry minutes - if they exist

- seldom record the presence of the incumbent, especially during the eighteenth century. Churchwardens' and overseers accounts, which are often jumbled together in a single volume, indicate the same lack of interest. The records which are extant suggest that the task of caring for the poor might have been rendered easier and been carried out more efficiently if the often semi-literate overseers had had more guidance, not only in keeping their accounts, but also with administration.

One instance of clerical participation in the affairs of the poor comes from Chiddingly, where in 1659 several parishioners had agreed with William Rogers the minister that 'during the time that the said Mr. Rogers shall live in the said parish the overseers of the poore in there severall yeeres shall on ye first Munday in the moneth at Nyne of the clock in the morning bring there monethly Accompt or send it in writing unto the said parish church and that then and there the said Mr. Rogers shall carefully examine the same. And if he finde it honest and legall he shall write it in this booke. And for so doing his Glebe lands shall be free from taxes towards the releefe of the poor.' (4)

Unfortunately, the industrious Mr. Rogers, who was being well rewarded for his supervisory work, did not remain long in Chiddingly. His return to Chailey in 1662 has already been noted. (5) The survival of the few pages of Chiddingly records, an unusual occurrence in Cuckmere parishes at this early date, may well have been due to the example of

Rogers' supervision. At Heathfield too, where an almost complete series of overseers' accounts has survived for the period, (although in a delicate state of repair) there is evidence that some supervision took place until the end of the seventeenth century, for the pages which contain the annual rating assessments are methodically kept. There are entries for payments 'for keeping the books' and the entries are signed yearly by the incumbents William Wilkin and John Sefton. Unfortunately their eighteenth-century successors were less vigilant. (6)

The Chiddingly parish officers certainly took their duties seriously and, perhaps, this too was a legacy from Will Rogers, for included in the Churchwardens' Accounts for the same period are references to the statute of 1601, and to the duties of parish officers and to the penalties involved in avoidance of these duties. 'The overseers of the poore doe forfeit 20/- for every defaulte if they meet not monethly with the churchwardens and others of ye parish in ye church, on Sunday after evening prayer, except they be let by such cause as shall be alowed a good cause by two justices of the peace...' A fine of twenty shillings would certainly have been a deterrent to any parish officer who had thought of avoiding a monthly meeting. The Chiddingly wardens also enumerated their tasks, 'to cause the poor to work; to relieve the impotent; to put out apprentices; to force young people to service; to prevent other poor from settling in ye parish; and divers other things as the raising of money and keeping of the account.' (7) The local wording

suggests some desperation - 'to force young people to service' - and much unease at the enormity of the task - 'divers other things.' Although expectations of efficiency were probably low compared with the requirements demanded in a modern welfare state, the burden imposed on untutored parish officers was vast. Since it was the parish - a unit based on the Church - which was burdened, parochial officers deserved greater support from the clergy in the performance of their duties than they appear to have received. They also lacked the central supervision received during the early Stuart period, when the Privy Council had kept tabs on the work of parish officers.(8)

Research on the Old Poor Law

Gregory King showed that the erudite and governing classes were aware of the problem of poverty in 1688. It was a problem which had been taxing rulers and governments since Henry VIII had proposed that the able unemployed should be directed to work on harbours, highways, fortifications and waterways.(8) It also continued to exercise pamphleteers and writers during the whole of the eighteenth century, yet there are few recent studies of parochial pauper administration between 1660-1780.

In her classic work *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century*, first published in 1926, Dorothy Marshall recognised the importance of poor relief after the Restoration, because of the effect caused by social and industrial change. Other twentieth-century historians have

often confined their studies to the period after 1770, like the Hammonds' in their study of the village labourer. (9)

Modern academics have written little about the lives of the poor during the eighteenth century and often the tendency has been to concentrate on the period after 1780, when the need for relief was exacerbated by rising price of corn and the Revolutionary War with France. For example, J.D. Marshall's *The Old Poor Law* is dated 1795-1834, and R.W. Malcolmson's *Life and Labour in England 1700-1780* has few references to the administration of the Poor Law. It seems that very little research into the lives of the poor between 1700-1780 has been carried out recently. This may be because the enormity of the problem at the end of the eighteenth century has obscured the fact that it existed before that date. It has obscured the fact that in the earlier period the poor, in many parishes, were not simply lonely old widows, or orphaned children, but also labourers and sometimes husbandmen, whose smallholdings no longer provided subsistence in a world of rising prices; or tradesmen affected by growing specialization and the decline of local self-sufficiency..

Some writers who have offered an opinion have tended to over-dramatize the sufferings of the poor by suggesting that all justices, overseers and churchwardens were cruel and heartless and sought an easy solution to the task of providing for the poor. 'Poverty meant lives of deprivation and dependence; relying on bread as the main foodstuff; freezing in shacks and cellars... enduring the

petty tyranny of poor-law overseers; undergoing back-breaking toil for pittances under brutal masters, with ahead only the prospect of a pinching old age, neglected, or in a poor-house.' (10)

Conditions were hard and there is no doubt that the poor did suffer. Entries in parish registers confirm that wayfarers did freeze in shacks, or similarly inclement buildings. At Berwick it was recorded early in 1660 'was baptized a daughter of Edward Halsey and Margaret his wife, waygoers or beggars which child of theirs was borne in Goodman Dobson's barne' and in the same parish in 1669 'Was buried a poor old travelling man, who came out of Kent intending to have been a shepherd in these parts, but being taken sick allmost at the end of his journey he died in one of the neighbours barns of the parish.' (11) However, it does not necessarily follow that those who dealt with the poor were all heartless rogues. Compassion is suggested in the Berwick entry by the phrase 'a poor old travelling man' and by the lengthy explanation of his plight. Later entries from the Berwick parish records show that this was an area where travellers or 'passengers' were frequently supported by donations from the funds. In 1679, for instance, the outlay on travellers amounted to nineteen shillings and twopence and in 1682 sixteen and threepence was expended by the churchwardens for the same purpose. The people on whom this money was spent were vagrants, who had no claim on the parish at all. (12)

For the most part, those responsible for the lives of the poor were ordinary parishioners, some of whom were not far from the bread line themselves. They attempted to cope with an increasingly difficult problem, never having been trained for the job and having few guide lines on which to base their decisions. The belated *ad hoc* dictates of central government were always based on finding an immediate answer to a particularly gnawing problem - never on a reasoned analysis of possible future trends, and always on the belief that the poor were a necessary, if troublesome, adjunct to society. When answers were produced, it was because untrained local officials demanded help in coping with their responsibilities towards the poor and the answers invariably brought problems of their own.

The Act of Settlement 1662

The Restoration was a time for new beginnings and in 1662 an attempt was made to alleviate the difficulties associated with administering the Poor Law by restricting pauper mobility - a restriction which was no answer to the increased mobility of labour demanded by specialization and the growth of towns. As in 1601, responsibility for action was again disposed on a local basis by the 1662 Act of Settlement. The problem of ensuring that the poor did not wander from their parish of settlement, without very good reason, proved increasingly burdensome to justices and parish officers during the whole of the period 1660-1780. It has been suggested that people were remorselessly moved around the country at the whim of local officials.

'Parishes would accept no responsibility for people without a settlement, and never hesitated to pass the buck. The poor, old and sick were ruthlessly driven on.' (13)

Remorseless and ruthless are strong words and do not often appear to have been applicable in the Cuckmere Valley, which was, admittedly, a totally rural and isolated area. The evidence suggests that the old and sick were kindly cared for in the parishes where they lived. They were rarely the subjects of removal orders. In this they were undoubtedly more fortunate than their urban counterparts.

A catalogue of the settlement orders and cases at the Sussex Quarter Sessions has been compiled for the years 1661-1729. (14) It shows that the justices, sitting at Quarter Sessions made 116 orders concerning the removal of people living in the twelve Cuckmere parishes during that period. In seventy years an average of between nine and ten people/families were removed from or to each parish - at the most one person/family per parish every seven years. Although removal did cause unhappiness and instability to the subjects of an order, these figures do not represent the enormous traffic in human misery often associated with the Settlement laws. It has been shown that paupers in Cambridgeshire were often carefully examined by the magistrates before an order was signed and that parish officers took the trouble to ascertain the facts and often engaged in correspondence before a removal was carried out. (15) The evidence from Cambridgeshire suggests that

justices and parish officers were not always totally uncaring. In Sussex too, justices made examinations before reaching a decision to grant a removal order. Few have survived for the Cuckmere area, but it is clear from the evidence in Quarter Sessions Order Books that decisions made and advice offered by the justices were not confined to the occasions when they appeared at the Sessions.

When a settlement case did drag on this was often due to an attempt by the authorities to be scrupulously fair. In October 1662 John Wymarke was the subject of a suspended order removing him from Arlington to Warbleton. The case was referred to the next monthly meeting of the justices. Although there are no records relating to these monthly meetings, it is obvious that the case was discussed in some detail. Wymarke's is a story in which fate and a particularly unpleasant master played a considerable part, but one from which officialdom emerges fairly well. In 1660 John Wymarke had been settled in Hailsham, where his landlord, Richard Ellis had 'distreyned his working tools and wearing apparrell and other goods and turned him out of the house.' So Wymarke was not only homeless, but deprived of the means of earning his living. The bench at Lewes put the matter into the hands of two local justices, Sir John Pelham of Halland in East Hoathly and Sir Thomas Dyke of Horam in Waldron.

Their decision is not recorded, but for some reason they must have decided to send him to Warbleton, where the overseers appear to have accepted Wymarke's right to a

settlement, for his son John, was baptised there early in 1661. Before October 1662 he must have moved to Arlington, so causing the Arlington overseers to lodge their complaint. After due consideration by the justices, he, with his wife and family, were ordered to be removed from Arlington to Warbleton in January 1663. By July he had evidently returned to Arlington where he had obviously found employment, but the overseers still considered that he might become a liability and he was the subject of a further removal order. Since he had left Warbleton illegally, he was sentenced to three days in the House of Correction at Battle. Having served his sentence, he was ordered to return to Warbleton. In October 1663 he was granted permission by the justices to work in Arlington, since Warbleton parish officers had issued him with a certificate accepting liability should he become a charge on the parish. Perhaps Wymarke's tenacity of purpose in leaving Warbleton can be explained by the 1665 Hearth Tax returns (there are no 1662 returns for Warbleton) which state that he had been taxed for two flues. The additional comment 'burnt down' was added. Though he evidently caused no further trouble, his continued residence in Arlington was obviously a sore point with Arlington officials. When he was buried there in 1670 he was described as John Wymarke of Warbleton. (16)

Wymarke's history illustrates the ease with which an able-bodied, self-supporting and willing labourer could so easily find himself in a 'Catch-22' situation and become a

victim of the poverty trap. Repeated forced removals might cause any workman to become chargeable, even though he might not have been so when the first removal was made.

Wymarke's attempts to move to Arlington, where he had found employment, suggest that he was no malingerer. Evidently, the Warbleton officials knew it, for they agreed to provide him with a certificate of indemnity, but not until he had served a term in the House of Correction. The law decreed that this was the penalty for contravening a removal order and the law was designed to punish the unworthy, not to support the unfortunate; public morality could not distinguish between the unemployed who wished to work and those (labelled 'sturdy-beggars' by the Tudors) who did not.

When the settlement cases for the Cuckmere Valley are arranged by parish they show, not surprisingly, that a greater number of removals was made in the more populous wealden areas and that this pattern was not broken even in the downland parishes of Seaford and Alfriston, where the existence of an former port and market respectively might have been expected to reflect on the population figures.

The breakdown was :-

<u>Weald</u>		<u>Downs</u>	
Hellingly	- 25	Alfriston	- 8
Warbleton	- 23	Berwick	- 5
Arlington	- 19	Seaford	- 5
Chiddingly	- 19	West Dean	- 4
Heathfield	- 18	Litlington	- 1
Waldron	- 11	Lullington	- 0

This amounted to 138 instances of removal in the twelve

parishes, but since 44 (just under a third) were re-settled in another Cuckmere parish, the actual total of people/families removed was 116.

In the weald the number of removals does not seem to have been affected by the size of the parish. For example, the number of removals in Warbleton (c.5,000 acres) was greater than that in neighbouring Heathfield (c.8,000 acres) while Hellingly (c.6000 acres) had the greatest number of all. The low rate of removals in Waldron may perhaps have been accounted for by the fact that Waldron furnace, offering employment opportunities, was in work for the whole of the period, while Heathfield furnace was not re-opened until 1693. It is not surprising that those parishes in which the greatest number of removals was made all possessed large amounts of waste land, where landless and workless families may have been expected to squat. The Dicker Common - enclosed by the Pelhams in 1813 - bordered the parishes of Arlington, Chiddingly and Hellingly, while the waste of the manor of Heathfield, owned by the Sackville family, lay to the north of Warbleton and the west of Heathfield. Although few grants of the waste were made during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Court books of the manor of Heathfield suggest that the Dukes of Dorset were yielding to pressure, by leasing out small parcels of waste to former squatters, during the latter part of the eighteenth century. At a court held in September 1778 it was presented that Thomas Luck (one of several encroachers in the Punnetts Town area of Heathfield)

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hath lately enclosed a certain parcel of wasteland within this manor adjoining Cold Harbour and erected a cottage thereon without any licence or authority'. He was ordered to 'lay open the same...unless he shall agree for the same with the lord of the manor.' Evidently agreement was reached, for later entries in the court book show that Thomas Luck added to his holding. (17)

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In the majority of cases the removals did not entail transporting the unfortunate families for long distances, for apart from the 33% of inter-Cuckmere removals, at least 25% of the remainder were to a neighbouring parish. In some cases, it is possible that a private war between parish officers was conducted, and that those ordered to be removed may merely have been living on the wrong side of the road. For instance in 1704 George Petter was the subject of an order which required him to move from Hellingly to the neighbouring parish of Wartling. Later the same year the parish officers of Hellingly and Wartling were again at odds when it was confirmed that an order removing James Millam from Wartling to Hellingly was to be set aside. (18)

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Among the 116 cases only five involved journeys outside the county. In 1685 Mary Higham, 'a poor person' was ordered to be returned to St. Bride's in London from Chiddingly. (19) In January 1661 John Highems or Hiems, a recipient of parish relief, had died in Chiddingly and his burial had cost the parish seven shillings. (20) In 1663 Widow Hyams had been one of several widows supported by the

parish. Her death was recorded in 1667. There is no record of Mary Higham's baptism in the Chiddingly register, although those of Jone, Elizabeth and John, children of John Highems or Hiems, were recorded. (21) Where Mary was concerned, the overseers clearly decided that since her birth was not recorded, they were not liable for her upkeep and she was returned to London. Other out-county removals included three to Kent - to Goudhurst, Penshurst and Hawkhurst - and one to Reigate in Surrey. In no case was a very long distance travelled.

The number of removals made decennially, to the nearest unit of 5, was as follows:-

35							
30					X		
25							
20				X			
15	X					X	X
10		X					
05			X				
	1670	1680	1690	1700	1710	1720	1730

The figures show that from 1660 to 1690 the settlement problem declined, from which it might be inferred that the new Act of 1662, once it had been implemented, did reduce the number of removals. These years, though, represented a period when there had been a downward trend in grain prices. Between 1690 and 1710, however, the number of removals increased considerably, and between 1693 and 1699 bread prices doubled. (22) In 1708 the weather was disastrous and by 1709 the price of wheat had risen to 78s 6d a quarter.

In 1710 it still remained high at 78/-. By 1730 the price had been reduced to 36s 6d a quarter.(23) It is, therefore, necessary to consider the possibility that the fluctuating numbers of removals reflected the cost of living, since a fall in the price of bread would have reduced the dependency of border-line paupers and an increase might have produced a corresponding increase in poverty - thus causing overseers to consider removing those without a settlement.

The Workhouse Act 1722

Since the wheels of central government turned slowly, it may have been the poor harvests of the early eighteenth century which triggered the Workhouse Act of 1722. An increasing number of paupers were, it seems, applying to the justices for relief without referring to the overseers of their parish. The 1722 act made it plain that all paupers desiring relief must first apply to the overseers of their parish. It also gave churchwardens and overseers the power to build or purchase workhouses in order to 'keep, maintain and employ' the poor. Any poor person refusing to stay in the parish workhouse or refusing to work there could be refused relief. In fact, it gave parish officers the right to refuse out-relief, providing the parish had a workhouse.(24) This was similar to one of the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. It says much for the consciences of Cuckmere overseers and for their paternalistic attitude to the poor, that these powers were not generally enforced after 1723, when the Workhouse Act

came into force. Although some parishes in the Cuckmere did purchase or build workhouses, there was no undue haste to take action and there is no proof that, when it was taken, out-relief was refused as a result.

Some Cuckmere parishes already had poorhouses, or at least properties where the poor were housed. In Berwick in 1703 rent was paid to a landowner, Mr. Latham, 'for the house the poore live in'.(25) At Chiddingly a house whose occupant had absconded, leaving her children a charge on the parish, had been taken over as an almshouse by 1660, on the advice of Sir Thomas Pelham the local magistrate.(26) It was not until 1770 that a regular workhouse was built in this parish, probably on the site of the almshouse and one other granted to the parish in 1767. In 1770 it was recorded in the Vestry Book, 'we ... do consent and agree to put the poor in the workhouse ... as soon as possible may be.' Chiddingly Vestry Book, which contains many items relating to the poor at this period, also contains proof that the poor were engaged in spinning and that this was carried out at the workhouse and payments of threepence a pound for performing this task were made in 1771; during the previous year inmates had been engaged in hop-picking. This sudden attempt at efficiency at Chiddingly reflects the increases in the cost of maintaining the poor, which were noticeable all over the country, particularly after 1770.(27)

At Heathfield in 1690 the churchwardens made a payment

'for work done about the Almshouse,' but the poor were not housed here exclusively. The overseers' accounts for the year 1690/91 include a list of twelve paupers whose rents were paid by the parish, the highest being fifteen shillings. This was in spite of a decision made in 1683 that 'their shall be but ten shillings by the year paid for rent for one family'. (28) This boarding out of paupers made a considerable amount of work for the overseers, especially when lodgers made their own arrangements. In 1719, for instance, 'Richard Frost went into Widow Grovers hous in sted of going into John Durrants hous and John Durrant agrees to take 15/- for releasing Frost from his hous and Wid Grover agrees to take 15/- for Richard Frost living in her hous the rent to be paid to boath of them at Ester next, which is thirty shillings'. (29) By 1754 the parish had acquired other properties, but not necessarily a proper workhouse. In February 1754 the overseers had agreed that 'Edward Sattin shall have the liberty of living in the parish house wherein he now dwells with Ann his wife late Ann Taylor so long as she lives provided he takes upon him the intire maintenance of William Taylor and Mary Taylor children by her former husband...'. Heathfield finally acquired a workhouse in 1757. (30) It was not possible to discover whether payments for spinning or weaving were made by the Heathfield overseers.

In other parishes the 1722 act seems to have had a belated response. At Warbleton a building opposite the church, once used as a stable, which became the workhouse

was rebuilt in 1739, but it was probably not converted to a workhouse until about 1760, when the grant to the overseers was recorded in the Court Book. (31) Another property in an outlying part of the parish had been acquired by 1728. (32) Alfriston vestry recorded an agreement with Mr. William Batchelor in 1743 for a twenty-one year lease of Cross House in the market square at £4 0s 0d a year, but it was not until 1757 that the vestry decided that the parish officers 'shall purchase wheels, yarn and other proper materials for all the poor inhabitants... (who are now cloathed at the parish expence) with an intent that they shall spin, knit and sew and in order to promote industry in the ... parish.' (33) Spinning, subsidised by the parish, was being carried out at Hellingly in 1750 when two shillings and threepence was paid to Widow Clapson for spinning three pounds of tire and making a frock for John Clapson, but it appears that the work was not done in a workhouse and that Widow Clapson was being paid to make a smock for a member of her own family. The Hellingly overseers were still making monthly payments to about a dozen people and providing wood for them from 1747 to 1763. Although the expenses of building a workhouse do not appear in the overseers accounts, this was probably built in 1763, when fourteen shillings and sixpence was paid for insuring it. (34)

In Arlington, it is possible to tell exactly when the workhouse was built. This was ten years after the Workhouse

Act. The overseers' account book contains an agreement by the Vestry, made in 1733, to build a Workhouse, which includes specifications and details of the costs incurred. An inventory made in 1764 indicates the lay-out of the rooms. It was agreed with John Crowhurst of Wilmington to supply bricks, tiles and lime. The other contractors were local men. John Overing, the builder specified that he would 'build a house at Cane heath with the first floor one brick and a half and the other one brick thick and to build two single chimneys and two double, with three hearths in each chimney...and one oven grate.' The local carpenters, Thomas and John Crunden, provided flooring, rafters, doors (at one shilling each) and windows (at eighteen pence). The total cost of building the Workhouse was just over £200. John Crowhurst, the brickmaker, received £74 5s 5d; John Overing, the builder, was paid £22 10s 0d, and the Crunden brothers received £21 6s 6d. The remainder of the money was spent on timber and deal, the carriage of sand, unspecified goods, laths, scaffold poles, hair and glazing. Yet even after the workhouse was built, weekly payments of out-relief continued to be made. (35)

An inventory of the workhouse, made in 1764, shows that the ground floor contained a living room, a work room, a brewhouse, a buttery and a scullery. There were four chambers on the first floor and four garret rooms. The space under the garret stairs was used as storage area for food and contained a tub of pork, a tub of beef, a meal tub, five barrels and a crock of lard. Evidently the Arlington

vestry was determined to provide work for their poor for a 'work room' contained twelve spinning wheels - six for wool and six for linen. A determined effort at efficiency was made and the accounts show that the inmates spun both flax and wool which was then delivered to Richard Kite a local weaver, living at Milton Street in the south of the parish, to be woven into cloth. Subsequently Kite returned the cloth to the workhouse to be made up into sheets and blankets. (36)

The workhouse at Waldron was built in 1738, at a cost of £250 and the money was guaranteed by several of the most opulent landowners in the parish, namely Sir Thomas Dyke of Horam, Hugh Offley of Posingworth, the Hon. Henry Pelham of Esher (brother of the Duke of Newcastle) and John Fuller of Brightling, who owned Waldron Furnace. The inventory of the workhouse, made in 1764, shows that although it had no workroom like the one at Arlington, and was generally smaller, work was being carried out, probably in the kitchen, for it was here that the two woollen wheels and two spinning wheels mentioned in the inventory were kept. In the following year this had been amended to two woollen wheels and three linen wheels, but even so, production was clearly not on the same scale as that at Arlington, where the parish officers appear to have been very well organised. (37)

Workhouse Governors

Criticism levelled at parish officers increased as the

eighteenth century progressed, for there was a general awareness that the system laid itself open to corruption. One particular practice caused general concern; in many cases the parish overseers opted out of running the workhouse by contracting with an outsider to do this for them and the result, with both parties to the contract driving a cheese-paring bargain, was that the poor suffered. (38) There is no proof that this practice was followed in the Cuckmere area, although it will be seen that contracts were made on a small scale with medical officers. (39) Many writers condemned the contract system and in 1782 Thomas Gilbert was responsible for sponsoring an Act of Parliament, which attempted to curtail the powers of parish officers. Parishes, if they wished to do so, were enabled to join together to form a union. Gilbert's Act also provided for the appointment of workhouse governor's - a piece of legislation which lagged behind current practice. The Cuckmere Valley was not noted for the speed with which it adopted new regulations, but records show that in some parishes workhouse governors had been appointed prior to the legislation.

At Waldron the appointment of John Dulake at the considerable salary of £140 per annum was noted in 1763. In Hellingly a different system of payment was adopted. Here the appointee was John Brisenden and he was given the job at the end of March 1766. He was to be paid two guineas wages a year and one penny in every shilling earned by the poor in the workhouse - an incentive to see that the

inmates worked hard. As far as the outworkers are concerned, the record is not clear. It seems to indicate that Brisenden received nothing for their labour, but that they themselves were allowed to keep a penny in the shilling of the money they earned. The agreement was recorded as follows: 'and them that goo but to whork out of the hous and thay are to have one peney the shilling of there earning.' In 1770 Brissenden's salary was raised to ten pounds a year, but this does not appear to include a percentage of the paupers' earnings and does not compare favourably with the salary paid to Dulake at Waldron.

A later governor of Hellingly workhouse was Thomas Cornwall, himself a pauper, who arrived at the workhouse in December 1777 with a substantial amount of furniture, including a corner cupboard, three small tables, two arm chairs, three small chairs and numerous utensils. These, according to an inventory were placed in the governor's room. Other belongings including three beds (two with hangings) two chests, four boxes, china, glass and cooking utensils were housed elsewhere. It is possible that Cornwall had already entered into an agreement with the overseers, for he was certainly very well endowed for a pauper and eighteen months later he was appointed as workhouse governor. (40)

Footing the Bill

The act passed in 1601 had empowered churchwardens and overseers to raise the money to support the poor by

levying a parish rate which was paid by the occupiers of land. (41) Permission to levy the rate was given by the Justices of the Peace, but the amount paid by each occupier was regulated by the parish officers. In small country parishes the officers probably attempted to keep the rate as low as possible and the amount raised by the poor rate was often supplemented by other means. Until the Reformation a belief in redemption by good works had resulted in bequests to the poor by parishioners desirous of ensuring their place in heaven. Even in 1660, after a hundred years of protestantism, many people still continued to leave money to the poor. This may have been due to a survival of the old belief, or to a more pragmatic benevolence based on visual evidence that the poor were not well provided for. An analysis of the Cuckmere wills proved in the archdeaconry of Lewes between 1660-1690 shows that thirty-two individuals, drawn from different classes and occupations, made bequests to the poor. They included four gentlemen, five widows, thirteen yeomen, one spinster, one butcher, one ironfounder, one tailor, two tanners and one weaver. In four cases the trade or occupation of the benefactor was not stated. The small number of bequests by gentlemen, compared with those of yeomen may be accounted for by the fact that many gentlemen had their wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and are not included in this analysis.

The amount of money bequeathed normally ranged from forty shillings to five shillings. In some cases special bequests were made to individuals. Ann Mills of Hellingly

left five shillings to Thomas Gower 'a poor man of this parish' and to his wife 'one under petticoat, a pair of boddies and one pair of stockings and a linsey wollsey apron and one old waistcoat.' (42) James Wimble, an ironfounder of Waldron, bequeathed eight shillings 'to be used to buy wheat and make bread for the poor' on the day of his funeral. Henry Waymark, a jurat of Seaford, left money to buy bread and beer for the poor of that borough on the day of his burial. (43) Poor widows were the recipients of benevolence on six occasions. One benefactor, Thomas Harrison of Sutton in Seaford left a shilling each to ten poor widows in 1686 - probably a large bonus to them, which would scarcely have been missed by his children, for one of his sons received £450, while his eldest daughter received £250. (44) In Arlington it is significant that the seven bequests were all made before 1675, suggesting that the population as a whole was becoming less eager to give additional support to the poor, beyond the amount which they were forced to contribute to the parish rates.

The Berwick parish register, in December 1720, contained a list of recipients of £5, left by the mother of Sir Thomas Dyke and a further list of the recipients of £2. 10s 0d, left by William Giles. (45) Some gentry benefactors left more lasting bequests. Elizabeth Offley of Possingworth in Waldron bequeathed a rent charge of £1. 3s 0d per annum 'to be applied to the poor.' (46) Warbleton was particularly fortunate in having several benefactors who

founded charities which continue to operate (in a slightly altered form) to-day. The parish had already benefited to the extent of £8 0s 0d per annum, invested for the poor of the parish by the will of Henry Smith in 1620. At the end of the century, Paul Beeston, a gentleman who had recently purchased one of the largest and most profitable farms in the parish bequeathed land for the benefit of the poor. Beeston's bequest, arising from land in Maidstone, was to buy bread to be distributed to the poor in the churchyard, every Lord's day by the overseers - thereby excluding all dissenters from benefiting from the bequest.(47) Two other Warbleton benefactors, were concerned with the future of poor children, and this will be dealt with in a later chapter. Personal bequests provided not only relief for the poor, but also to the overseers.

There were other ways of raising money. Although the sacrament was only administered four times a year, the collection money taken on these occasions was intended for the support of the poor and this was certainly done in Hellingly and in Warbleton, where the rector Thomas Barton recorded the amounts received at the sacrament between 1732-1740. This amounted to £32. 0s 4d. Payments, usually of two shillings a quarter were made to several widows, to an old man described as 'Old Durrant' whose family were the owners of a substantial farm. Payments to other men, including those to John Mackly the tenant of Pilley Farm on the outskirts of the parish, suggests that subsidies were being paid to people who were not aged.(48)

At Chiddingly in 1660 the overseers who failed to attend monthly meetings were fined twenty shillings and those who did not pay up were liable to be forfeited 'by distraint of their goods for the use of the Poor.' (49) In Waldron an entry in the parish registers shows that money for the upkeep of the poor was also provided by the families of those parishioners who were not buried in wool. Being buried in linen was obviously a status symbol and those buried in it paid a forfeit, 'and the money accordingly distributed to the poor.' (50)

The Hellingly vestry recorded in their minute book the amount paid towards the upkeep of the poor between 1660-1750. These figures show the alarming way in which the cost had risen during the period. In 1660 it amounted to £60 0s 0d and in 1665 was only £31 0s 0d - the lowest figure. By 1750 it had reached £207 0s 0d, which was an improvement on the highest figure of £266 0s 0d recorded in 1743, although in 1736 the figure had fallen as low as £65 0s 0d. It is possible that some mistakes in accounting had been made during the period 1736-43 as the rapid rise in costs during these years seems excessive, but when averaged out the figures show a substantial increase over the period. (51)

Unfortunately, no other Cuckmere parish possesses accounts which cover the entire period, but it can be assumed that the parishioners of Hellingly were not alone in having to provide an increasing amount of money to support

the poor. Throughout the period ratepayers all over the country complained bitterly at the rising cost of keeping the poor and, although there were fluctuations, it appears that the cost of keeping the poor rose steadily from 1685-1760. After 1770 there was an particularly sharp rise.(52) The burden of payment fell, not on wealthy landlords, but on the occupiers of land who were the ordinary parishioners. These same people were also responsible for the administration of the poor law, a task which demanded considerable time, energy, responsibility and ingenuity. The overseers and churchwardens received small thanks for performing this 'voluntary' task and posterity has tended to berate them for their activities. In the growing towns many cases of abuse and corruption did exist, but 'the impression left by ordinary parish accounts drawn from country districts ... is one of honesty.'(53)

In the Cuckmere this appears to have been the case: usually parish officers showed compassion and endeavoured to perform their onerous task to the best of their ability, but it is also evident that the stresses of providing for the increasing numbers of the poor in the eighteenth century did result in less individual charity and care, and in an increased desire to make the poor contribute to the cost of their upkeep; and eventually they ceased to be thought of as part of the parochial family, but as a race apart.

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CHAPTER XI - REFERENCES - PRIVATE CHARITY AND PUBLIC CHEESEPARING

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THE IMPOTENT POOR'Necessary Relief'

The moral authority of the church and its responsibility for the poor had been invoked by the Poor Law Act of 1601, when churchwardens were given authority to assist the overseers in caring for the poor and in assessing and collecting the poor rate. Although some parish officers, like those at Arlington who had begrudged the settlement of John Wymarke, may have questioned their involvement with the unemployed, no-one argued with the dictum that they should raise 'competent sums of money for and towards the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old (and) blind...' (1) The obligation of the parish to care for the impotent poor was taken for granted.

Those who attended church were often accorded special treatment and when Paul Beeston of Warbleton had stipulated that his bequest of bread was to be distributed to the poor in the churchyard every Lord's day, this may have been not simply to exclude dissenters, but also to ensure that only the 'worthy' poor would benefit. He may also have chosen the site and time (a public place at a time when many parishioners would be around to witness the proceedings) to ensure that the poor did receive the bequest. On one occasion the dole was in jeopardy. In 1691, during an extended quarrel concerning the election of churchwardens, one of the protagonists (a former holder of the office) was accused of swearing, prophanity and drunkenness and, it was

maintained, he had also broken into the vestry and seized the bread which had been set aside for the poor and thrown it over the churchyard wall. Perhaps the culprit had begrudged the charity extended towards the poor. (2)

Caring for the Aged

In the early years of the period the aged, especially widows, often constituted a large part of a parish's dependents. During 1664 the Chiddingly overseers were supporting three widows and two abandoned children on a permanent basis. The three women received pensions ranging from one shilling and sixpence to two shillings and sixpence weekly, and were also being supplied with wood and faggots and articles of footwear and clothing. Widow Harries - who received the smallest pension had clearly been 'set on work' as payments for 'frames, wists and rods' were made on her behalf. She also received payments for 'workmanship', which supplemented her small income. (3) At Berwick Widow Mocket received three shillings and sixpence a week in 1661, her rent (for an unspecified period) cost the parish five shillings and she also received a bushel of malt, costing half-a-crown. She died before the end of the year and her goods were sold for £1. 6s. 0d. She had cost the parish £5 10s during the course of the year. (4) Widow Mocket appears to have been very generously treated, for the most highly paid pensioners at Westbury-on-Trym received six shillings a month at this early period and some received less. (5)

In the late seventeenth century, before the establishment of workhouses, these old people all received out-relief, but even in the eighteenth century, after workhouses had been built, the elderly continued to receive pensions, although they were not living in the workhouse. In certain cases it was advantageous for the overseers to permit payments of out-relief away from the workhouse. In November 1764 an agreement was made between the Waldron parish officers and Francis Smith, by which Smith was promised a shilling a week for keeping his mother for the future. It was obviously cheaper to allow Smith this money than to provide for his mother's entire upkeep by the parish. A similar provision had been made by Chiddingly Vestry in 1748 when the churchwardens and overseers had entered into an agreement with William Chapman of West Firle. Chapman promised 'to take his mother Sarah Chapman home to his habitation in West Firle and to provide for her in sickness and in health during the time of her natural life and after her death to be at all expences in defraying her funeral charges.' In compensation the parish officers of Chiddingly had engaged to allow Chapman six shillings a month. (6)

In persuading William Chapman to pay for his mother's funeral the Chiddingly officers had done well, for even pauper burials could be a costly business. When John Hiems was buried in 1662 and it had cost the parish ten shillings, this included digging his grave and ringing a funeral knell, laying him forth, carrying him to the church and providing a

sheet to bury him in.(7) Costs were to rise after 1666, when the Act for burying in wool became law. In 1702 Heathfield overseers expended five shillings and sixpence for tending Widow Smith in her sickness and making an affidavit that she had been buried in wool. Two pounds of wool to bury her in cost a shilling. Her coffin was six shillings. Widow Backham was paid a shillings for laying her forth. The sexton was paid half a crown for digging the grave and for tolling the knell and another half crown was expended for taking the widow to her grave.(8) These payments suggest that the poor were, at least, decently buried. The same care was apparent in rural areas elsewhere, for Dorothy Marshall, writing of a funeral at Westbury-on-Trim, states 'there is nothing about it to suggest that particular unloveliness of a pauper funeral which, according to literature, became the distinguishing mark at a later date.'(9)

One pauper at Waldron was buried in a very grand grave, but this occurred because the parson was determined on revenge. In October 1766 Ann Hammond the wife of William Hammond a tanner from Lewes, whose family had lived in Waldron, was buried in Waldron churchyard. Apparently, Hammond erected a vault after the burial without asking the consent of the absentee rector, who later recorded, 'having buried the corpse could demand only six shillings and eightpence for breaking the ground and two shillings for reading the service.' He found a way to get his own back,

for he concluded that he might bury anyone he liked in the Hammond vault and accordingly in December 1766, he noted in the register, 'Thomas Ifold buried in the vault of Tanner Hammond's wife of Lewes, no satisfaction having been made for said vault.' To make his intention quite plain the rector had added in parenthesis '(N.B. from the Workhouse.)'(10) By burying the pauper Thomas Ifold, in this way, the rector demonstrated, not only a petty maliciousness towards an affluent ex-parishioner but also a totally uncaring attitude towards the poorer members of his flock.

The aged, if they could not be cared for by relations, seem to have had a certain amount of freedom. In Chiddingly the arrival in the workhouse of old Dame Stephens was recorded in October 1778. In August the following year, another entry was made, 'then whent old Dame Stephens from the Work House to Mayfield, but soon came to the workhouse again.' No intimation of the cause for this excursion is given, and she may, of course, have been the subject of a Removal Order, but the Chiddingly overseers appear to have been so tolerant about the affair that it seems unlikely.

When Dame Stephens had first entered the Chiddingly workhouse a list of her belongings had been drawn up, and it shows that moving the aged from one domicile to another could have been quite a costly exercise. She possessed a bedstead and feather mattress, curtains and rails, a blanket, three sheets and a coverlet. She also owned two

chests, a linen wheel and a woollen wheel and some hand cards, a copper boiler, an iron kettle, a brass skimmer, an iron dripping pan, two iron candlesticks and one little table. Had it been necessary to remove all these to Mayfield and back, it seems certain that the overseers would have registered a complaint. The quality of these items was not noted beyond the fact that some of the cooking utensils were made of brass or iron or copper, which suggests that they were of some value. The Chiddingly overseers were quite capable of recording the quality of goods owned by inmates, or ex-inmates, as in the case of Richard Jeal, deceased in 1776. His belongings had consisted of two old greatcoats, one old waistcoat, one damson coloured coat, one old pair of leather breeches, three stocks, one good hat, one round frock, two pairs of shoes with buckles and one plain rule 'good for nothing'. It seems that the only item of value that Richard Jeal had possessed had been his new hat. (11)

Caring for the Sick

The suggestion made by Porter in *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* that the sick were ruthlessly driven from one parish to another may well be founded on one famous case, related by the conscience-stricken grocer of East Hoathly, Thomas Turner. It concerned a family who had lived in East Hoathly parish and who were craftily encouraged to move to neighbouring Waldron by the East Hoathly vestry. On October 24th 1757, wrote Turner 'it was

the unanimous consent of all present to give to Tho. Daw, upon condition that he should buy the house in the parish of Waldron for which he hath been treating, by reason that he would then be an inhabitant of Waldron, and clear of our parish, halfe a tun of iron, £10; a chaldron of coals etc., £2; in cash £8; and find him the sum of £20, for which he is to pay interest, for to buy the said house; ... I believe it is a very prudent step... for he being a man with but one leg, and very contrary withall, and his wife being entirely deprived of that great blessing, eyesight, there is great room to suspect there would, one time or other, happen a great charge to the parish, there being a very increasing family...' Although both Daw and his wife were disabled, they were not actually sick, nor were they poor, for Turner admitted that Daw possessed £80 and also that he had formerly been engaged in the smuggling trade, which Turner suggested had 'brought him into a trifling way of life.' He may well have trifled with the East Hoathly parish officers, for the name of Thomas Daw does appear in the Waldron overseers accounts on several occasions from 1763 onwards, but not as a pauper.. He was a blacksmith who supplied goods required by the poor.(12)

In a short account of the treatment of pauper invalids in Sussex in the eighteenth century, it was found that 'parish officers made real efforts to alleviate suffering'.(13) This view tallies with the Cuckmere evidence. There are references throughout the period to sums of money expended on medicines, or other supplements,

for the sick. In Warbleton Dame Heathfield was allowed a piece of meat 'for her husband when sick' in 1730 and in the same year John Bignall was allowed sixpence 'to buy something for his fitts'. Bignall had also been bled, for which the parish had expended another sixpence. They had also allowed him four bushels of oats to fatten his hog, for which the not inconsiderable sum of eight shilling was paid. At Hellingly in 1747 Thomas Ince was paid sixpence for supplying salve and ointment for Lucy Oxley's leg and Dr. Roots' bill for a month amounted to £1 3s 0d. (14)

In the earliest accounts, especially, payments were frequently made to parishioners who required an extra subsidy on account of 'being sick'. Widow Powell of Berwick was receiving five shillings a month from the parish in 1661 and there was an additional payment of one shilling 'for 1 weeke tendance of her'. (15) Between March and April 1664 Widow Harries of Chiddingly received one shilling and threepence a week for her keep, plus five shillings worth of faggots. During the rest of April and up to 2nd May she received four shillings and sixpence maintenance, plus an extra fourpence because she was sick and a further payment of one shilling and fourpence was made 'to Cornford's wife for tending of her mother.' So it appears that Mrs. Cornford was actually being paid by the parish for looking after her own mother because she was ill. The maintenance payments were continued in May when Mrs. Cornford also received three shillings and ninepence for looking after

Mrs. Harris for five weeks. In June the widow, as well as her regular payment for upkeep received one shilling more 'in her sickness' and Mrs. Cornford was paid a shilling a week for looking after her. (16) At the end of the seventeenth century Gregory King estimated that many labouring families existed on £15 a year, though this was a bare existence. It is thought that King's figures were realistic and that an average family might receive £10 to £14 subsistence annually. (17) King's average family consisted of five people, so one person might have been expected to survive on £3 a year. Based on these figures, the payments (including five shillings worth of faggots) made to Widow Harris were not ungenerous for the period; even so, she probably lived in conditions of extreme wretchedness.

The overseers in Heathfield in 1702 were slightly less generous. In July John Holmes was paid two shillings and sixpence 'for lodging Jane Milton 3 weeks and tending her' but a payment of five shillings and fourpence was also made 'for vittels for Jane Milton in her lying in'. It is possible that Jane's husband had disappeared, so leaving her a charge on the parish, for the accounts include an amount of eight shillings and fivepence paid 'for charges to fet (sic) George Milton and for three warrants.' In the same year the Heathfield overseers expended eight shillings on behalf of John Gatland 'that hath lately broke his legge'. (18) The expenses of normal events like childbirth (when a disappearing husband had to be reckoned with) or

minor calamities like broken legs (which could push an able-bodied labourer over the border line into poverty) could easily and unexpectedly devolve upon the parish.

Another frequent problem was smallpox. In 1700 Widow Harmer of Heathfield had been paid twelve shillings 'for tending of the Smith family of the small pox being the last payment.' (19) Although the Hellingly register for the years from 1722-4 is in bad condition, it is evident from the remains that at least four people had been killed by smallpox early in 1723. (20) Although outbreaks of the disease were frequent in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the recovery rate was favourable and the fatalities were usually children. In the 1750's inoculation against smallpox became popular and in some Sussex parishes even the poor were vaccinated. (21) No evidence of vaccination of paupers in the Cuckmere parishes has been found, though at least one burial as a result of vaccination took place. This was in Waldron, where William the son of Mr. Hammond the tanner resident in Lewes had 'died under inoculation for the small pox' aged six in 1763. (22) In some parishes there was still resistance to the idea at the end of the century, perhaps because of instances like this. William Count, a surgeon and apothecary, who rented a large house at Rushlake Green in Warbleton in 1796 was granted a lease which included provisions against his receiving lunatics, or idiots, or people who had 'the small pox in the natural way or by

inoculation.' (23)

By the 1760s, when the cost of caring for the poor and sick was rising considerably, some parishes embarked on the contract system, in order to alleviate their problems.

They signed contracts with local physicians, which they hoped would prove less costly than paying for the medical care of individual paupers on a monthly basis. In Arlington in April 1766 it was agreed with Doctor Pendril 'to attend all the poor of the parish of Arlington and find them medicens (small pox excepted)....' for £8 a year.

Broken bones were not included in the contract. A cost of half a guinea to set them was agreed. The provisions regarding smallpox and broken bones seem to have been general, for an agreement between Hellingly vestry and Mr. Bachelor made a year later stipulated that he should 'apply in a proper and careful manner all kinds of surgery and medicines, broken bones and smallpox excepted'. He was to charge eight guineas a year. (24)

Lunacy

Sometimes a situation arose which required unusual vigilance by the parish officers and which placed a considerable strain on the already over-stretched financial resources of a parish. Minor cases of mental illness could normally be dealt with in the home, but when the patient became violent the assistance of the overseers might be required, partly because of the need for the physical restraint of the patient, and partly because such illness made exceptional demands on the family purse. In the early

eighteenth century, such a case disturbed the parish of Warbleton.

James Wimble had evidently been a man of some substance, for he had owned property in Westham as well as occupying land in Warbleton. By 1719 the Westham property had been sold - possibly because Wimble was no longer able to work. (25) In 1721 there are several references in the overseers accounts from which it is possible to trace the course of his malady. In March it had been necessary to lock him up. The parish officers had paid a shilling for a lock to restrain him and when he broke it they had called in Doctor Colbran, who had bled him - a popular remedy for many ills at that time. This had cost the parish ten shillings. Evidently he had become so violent that his wife was unable to cope with him alone, for by the end of March Thomas Chapman was being paid 'for tending of James Wimble and expenses at his house.' There follows a horrific list of payments for items like links and hooks, which show that Wimble had been chained up. He had broken loose, even though the door of his room had been fastened with three pieces of iron. By June this had been re-inforced, for payments were made for 'carying the timber and boards to fitt up the place to keep James Wimble in,' and more than one man was required to look after him. In August he broke loose again and more chains were required. (26) The severity of his treatment by the parish is a reflection of the cruelty of the age in which he lived. In some cases,

lunatics were sent to a House of Correction - a place totally unsuited for the care of the mentally ill. (27)

James Wimble was evidently moved to the St. Mary of Bethlehem hospital, for a payment of £2 12s 6d was made for carrying him to London. Finally, in October 1721 Goody Wimble received fifteen shilling for 'looking after her husband in his lunacy' for five weeks. Because of James' illness, a formerly self-supporting family had had to apply to the parish for relief. (28) No burial for James Wimble was recorded in the Warbleton parish register and it must be concluded that the unfortunate man ended his days in Bedlam - a place where until 1770, the inmates were jeered at and ridiculed by penny visitors who flocked there for entertainment. (29)

CHAPTER XII - REFERENCES - THE IMPOTENT POOR

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CHAPTER XIII

SUFFER, LITTLE CHILDREN!

Attitudes to the Young

Children living in the Cuckmere Valley were involved in forty-seven removal cases heard at Quarter Sessions between 1660-1730. (1) Parish records show that at this period and until 1780 there were also many cases concerning the removal and placement of children which were dealt with on a purely parochial basis. It is those concerning very young children, which draw attention to a concept of childhood at this time, which was totally at variance with modern ideology. In fact, childhood as we know it, did not exist. Laslett believed it was not until the Victorian period that there was some recognition that children were individuals with their own particular needs, while Stone argued that this recognition commenced in the middle of the eighteenth century. (2) When pauper children were concerned, scant attention was paid to their individuality or their needs and it was children, either orphaned, with a widowed mother, with an unmarried mother, or with wayward parents, who were the most vulnerable victims of the Act of Settlement and the Old Poor Law.

The Burden of Widowhood

In January 1715 Elizabeth, widow of Robert Tutt, a saddler, together with her children Robert, Elizabeth and Anne, resident at Alfriston, were the subject of a removal order which decreed that they were to be sent to Rye. The burden of three children - Robert, the youngest, was exactly

a year old in 1715 - could have been sufficient to project her from comfort to poverty. There was evidently some confusion concerning the parish of her settlement and the Alfriston authorities decided that it would be justified in obtaining a removal order for the family. Having been obtained, the order was set aside, but in July of the same year another order confirmed that the Tutts were to be sent, not to Rye, but to West Dean, only a short journey from Alfriston.(3) In this case the children remained with their mother, but the death of their father, followed by their decline into poverty and ejection from Alfriston must have been traumatic.

The Owen children of Chiddingly were even more unfortunate, although they were not the subject of a settlement order. The Chiddingly Overseers Accounts show that, over several years in the 1660s, many payments were made to support two children, Stephen and Mary Owen, who were housed separately with different families. Their father, Robert Owen, had died in October 1658. Mary was born the following spring. Shortly afterwards their widowed mother absconded, apparently terrified because she was being victimised by her cousin Richard Page. Because she owed him money, he had forced her to mortgage the lease of her house and croft to him and 'did make away with all her goods to obscure places that ... the overseers of the poore in Chiddingly should not find it out.' Her two elder children Page and John Owen were put out as apprentices in

1659. Stephen and Mary were not apprenticed until 1671, by which time the children had cost the parish over £100. There is no further information about Mary, but Stephen survived the ordeals of his childhood; for the baptism of his son Stephen was recorded in the Chiddingly register in 1693.(4) Perhaps he and his sister were lucky to survive infancy for Porter, describing the treatment of pauper children, wrote 'One common device was to farm out pauper infants to minders or masters for a small premium. No one asked questions if the children then died.' Porter may have been basing his accusation on evidence from London, where there is proof that the survival of orphaned infants was extremely precarious. Enquiries made by Jonas Hanway while he was seeking evidence to prove the necessity for a Foundling Hospital, showed that the infant death rate in London workhouses (taken from a sample of eighteen) was 88%.(5) From the records studied relating to the Cuckmere Valley, there is little evidence to suggest, and none to prove, that pauper children died of neglect even though they were often put out to minders.

Single Parent Families

It was not unusual for a single parent, burdened with young children, to abscond in the same way as Mrs. Owen and it was not always the mother who was driven to this extremity. Margery, the wife of William Pont of Warbleton, was convicted of felony and sent to Horsham gaol. While she was in prison she gave birth to a daughter who was 'begotten and bourne after the said Margery Pont was

convicted of felony and during her remaine in the County Gaole'. In October 1663 an order was made to remove the child, then about a year old, from Horsham to Warbleton 'there to be left with ... the husband of the said Margery Pont to be by him provided for in case he shall be found of ability to maintain the said childe...' A proviso was made that if William Pont could not support the child then the overseers of Warbleton were to do so. William, rather than accept the responsibility of providing for a daughter he had not fathered, ran away.

The Warbleton overseers applied for a removal order for the child. Eventually, in April 1664, it was decreed that she should be returned to Horsham. The overseers of the town were to be allowed three shillings a week for her maintenance, 'until she shall happen to dye or be fit to be put forth as an apprentice, it being the judgement of the said court that the child ought to be provided for at the charity of the county'. (6) A lucky escape for the Warbleton overseers - perhaps not so fortunate for the child. Although it may be tempting to read too much into the ominous clause 'until she shall happen to dye', death in infancy was so common at this period that the clause frequently was included, as a safeguard, in wills, contracts or agreements relating to any children, not just to paupers.

Bastardy

It has been shown that the Society of Friends was greatly concerned with the moral behaviour of its members.

Conforming parishioners were also subject to strict codes of conduct, for the church was responsible for moral behaviour. The period following the Restoration is not renowned for the high tone of its moral standards, but Laslett has shown that the general reaction against Puritan rule did not result in a relaxation of morals at a local level. Churchwardens' Presentments in the late seventeenth century show that deviating Cuckmere residents - conformists as well as dissenters - were presented and even in the eighteenth century, when clerical supervision was lax, cases of moral offences were still tried in the ecclesiastical courts, though few Cuckmere cases were recorded after 1730. (7) It is understandable that parish officers - as the local pillars of the church - should have been censorious about moral deviations. Children born out of wedlock were often a charge on the parish from the day they were born and overseers may also have been resentful towards them, because of the amount of work they caused and the money they cost. The appellations 'bastard' or 'base-born' figure frequently in parish and county records and these children were rarely referred to by their Christian names. It seems that, in the official mind, these unfortunate children were not accorded an identity. In some cases they were not even baptised. The Heathfield registers finally record the baptism of Catherine 'the base born daughter of Eliz Bissenden about the age of 18 yrs baptised October 12th 1678'. (8)

At the age of seven when, according to expectations

then prevalent, they could go to work and provide some assistance towards their own upkeep, illegitimate pauper children, whose settlement could be proved to differ from that of their parents, were very often separated from them. In July 1705 an order removing Richard Funnell and his mother from Ripe to Chiddingly was set aside - Rachel Funnell, the mother, had been born in Ripe. According to the order, Richard was 'to go with his mother until he is seven years of age.' The inference being that after that age he would be separated from her. The Ripe parish register contains the information that 'Richard Funnell base son of Rachel born in Chiddingly' had been baptised in Ripe.(9) It was not the place of baptism, but the place of birth from which Richard derived his settlement, for until 1744 a bastard was settled where it was born. This law was the cause of cruelty and brutality all over the country, for parish officers went to great lengths to have a woman who was unlawfully pregnant removed before the child was born.(10)

Not all illegitimate children were as lucky as Richard Funnell. His mother survived the experience of his birth and he remained with her until he was seven. It was quite normal for an illegitimate child to be fostered in a parish where its mother was not settled. John Walker overseer of the poor in Berwick received eighteen shillings in 1689 'of my cossen Andrews of Alfriston for keeping of a bastard child' for twenty-seven weeks.(11) Early removal from the

parish of his birth was also the fate of the illegitimate son of Elizabeth Sevenocke, born in Hellingly. The reputed father was George Humphrey also of Hellingly - a married man. When the child was about five years old his father placed him 'as a nurse child with one Stephen Humphrey' possibly the child's grandfather, who was living in Heathfield parish. Heathfield parishioners complained unavailingly. In January 1662, when he was aged about seven years, an order was made for young Sevenocke to be sent to Hellingly from Heathfield, the latter parish being discharged of responsibility for his upkeep. Stephen Humphrey had died and the Heathfield parishioners were able to prove that the child had become a charge on their parish. The court debated the matter in the presence of some representatives from Hellingly and the child was sent back to that parish 'there to be provided for by the overseers.' His father was apparently no longer responsible for him. (12)

Another bastard case from Heathfield also illustrates that a putative father's responsibility ceased when the child had passed the age of seven. An entry at the back of one volume of overseers' accounts certifies that on the 11th January 1748 Samuel Trash had agreed to pay the parish £20 during the course of the next eight years and that these payments would acquit him 'from ever paying any money or being in any ways charged towards maintaining a male bastard child born of the body of Mary Lusted.' (13)

If the putative father could not be named or found and

made to make a contribution, liability for the child's upkeep and that of the mother might last for several years. Ann Holms of Heathfield gave birth to an illegitimate child in 1714. She seems never to have had charge of the child, who was evidently lodged at the home of Ann's father, for many payments of two shillings a month were made to 'Old Hollms' for the upkeep of the baby. Ann was lodged with Widow Olliver and the parish paid her rent and two shillings to the midwife for attending her. Since she was in need, several cash payments were made to the mother and some 'coats' were provided for her child. The parish was still paying for the upkeep of mother and child in November 1716 when 'John Harmar promised to keep the child An Hollms laid to him.' The child, named William, was baptised in December 1716: perhaps he was finally accorded an identity because of John Harmar's promise. Ann Holms was still being kept by the parish in 1722 and a child of hers was lodged with William Smith. This was probably not young William, for the registers record the baptism in March 1718 of Elizabeth 'base born child of Anne Holmes'. In April 1723 it was recorded that the parish had received 'at the Sesshon in July' £5 4s 0d for keeping Ann Holms' child for one year. The child, Elizabeth, had been buried in Heathfield in February 1723. (14)

It was to avoid liabilities such as those acquired in the case of the Holms babies, that parish officers might bombard a putative father into a shot-gun wedding. Early

in 1721 the Warbleton overseers spent nineteen shillings and sixpence, in order to 'have Agnes Hodge before the justice to swear her touching her great belley and afterwards with Thomas Smith....' Thomas Smith, also from Warbleton, was a labourer. The justice who examined both culprits was John Fuller of Brightling. The outcome was successful from the point of view of the overseers, who wrote 'and married them at Dallington'. The marriage was by special licence - which probably accounted for a considerable part of the costs involved. John, son of John and Agnes Smith was baptised in Warbleton on the 20th May 1722 and Agnes Smith died on the 19th December the same year.(15)

When a putative father could not be forced into marriage, he might find himself serving a prison sentence unless he agreed to contribute to the upkeep of the child. Daniel Rhofe of Cheriton in Kent was ordered to be conveyed to the House of Correction at Battle and to remain there until he gave security to indemnify Heathfield parish against expenses incurred in connection with the birth of Abigail Harris's daughter in Heathfield on 11th September 1766, whom he acknowledged he had fathered. This is one of several examinations preserved in the Heathfield parish records and although examinations for other parishes do not appear to have survived, it can be assumed that similar demands from putative fathers were regularly made elsewhere.(16) Sometimes altruistic gestures were made to save parish expense, for the Hellingly vestry minutes contain an entry dated July 1667 stating that Samuel Barton

gentleman, and John Fuller yeoman, both of Hellingly 'have received £39 10s 0d by reson of an ade made by one Woodall for the securing the said parish from the charge of a bastard child gotten by one Glover on the body of one Elizabeth Heasman.' (17) In 1767 Richard Smith of Waldron agreed to bring up a bastard child and to pay the parish £12 for the privilege. (18)

Overseers often engaged in lengthy and expensive negotiations in order to avoid future expense for the parish in caring either for an illegitimate child or its mother. If the mother obtained employment in another parish, the infant might be separated from her at an early age, especially if it was considered that, in the long run, the ratepayers would benefit financially. In April 1723 Mary Mopham (or Mollypham) and Jane her bastard daughter, baptized in Warbleton on the 7th October 1722, were the subject of a revised removal order. Evidently both had been removed to Eastbourne, where it seems likely that Mary had obtained employment with a Mr. and Mrs. Barham. The order in 1723 confirmed Mary's settlement in Eastbourne, but in Jane's case the finding of the previous order were set aside and it was ordered that she should be returned to Warbleton. In order to divest themselves of the responsibility of caring for Mary Mopham the Warbleton overseers had expended a great deal of money and energy. A *subpoena* to secure the Barham's attendance at Lewes sessions had cost seven shillings and sixpence; and John Lattendedn,

the overseer, had paid eight shillings and sixpence when delivering the *subpoena* at Eastbourne - this also included the cost of bring Mary Mopham from Eastbourne to Warbleton. Mr. Barham was paid three shillings 'for coming to swere at Lewes'. A court order and counsel's fees cost £1 3s 6d. The parish officer and his man, who had conveyed Mary Mopham to Lewes on his horse, had stayed at Lewes for two nights and two days and the cost of their dinner and of expenses (including returning Mary to Eastbourne) had amounted to £2 11s 0d. This was not all. At some time during the visit Mary, who apparently had a bad cough, was attended by the doctor and he was paid five shillings for looking after her. Altogether the proceedings cost Warbleton parish almost £5. Before the end of the month they had also expended nine shillings and threepence on the unfortunate child Jane Mopham, left behind in Warbleton, for the local shopkeeper William Coney had supplied shoes, two pairs of stockings and some 'leading strings' for her.(19) The parish had divested itself of responsibility for Mary Mopham, even though it had been necessary to separate mother and daughter before the child was seven years old. In most cases concerning the placement of illegitimate children the overseers were driven by economic considerations. Their charity was, no doubt, weakened by the belief that children as individuals simply did not exist and that a bastard, born in sin, was the natural inheritor of the sins of its parents.

Apprenticeship

The abandoned Owen children caused the Chiddingly overseers some heartache. The officers in that parish in the latter part of the seventeenth century were prone to express their opinions in their account book and, although these are isolated examples, they do show that not all parish officials were uncaring about the children entrusted to them. The following is entered in the churchwardens' accounts for 1671 'Children who are a charge to a parish ... ought to be put to be apprentices by the churchwardens and overseers of the poore unto such masters as they shall see convenient with the consent of two Justices of the Peace and alone with each child such a sum of money as shall be reasonable, considering the age and abilities of the child....' So far, a simple statement of the law, but then follows, 'The word "convenient" ought to be thoroughly waived in putting out of apprentices ... poore apprentices are apt to be hardly dealt withall, but if they be compelled on Masters what can be expected'. This suggests compassion and caring for the children, but the final part of the entry also infers that the writer, (the entry is not signed) and probably his fellow vestry members, apportioned part of the blame on a system which advocated the sanction of the justices before a child could be put out as an apprentice, and on the bureaucratic requirements necessary for the drawing up of indentures. There is a feeling that results could be obtained, and obtained more fairly and cheaply, if

parish officers were allowed to manage without supervision.

'Churchwardens and overseers of the poore ought not (to) be to the persuasion of any, but stand to the golden rule concerning the putting out of poore children to be apren (sic) that is to doe unto others, as they would be done unto, if they were in like condition ... The way of compelling children on masters proves a profit to the justices clerke but a very unnecessary charge to the parish'. (20) Some concessions were made when apprentices were placed out by a parish, for the indentures were not required to be stamped, although they could not be made out without the permission of the justices. What the Chiddingly overseers regarded as an added burden was intended to be a safeguard, unless they had really exposed some sharp practice by the justices' clerk.

Parish records contain many references to pauper apprentices, though there are few which deal with this subject in a systematic way. Sometimes an official form was used; sometimes entries of agrrements appear in parish registers (frequently on the fly-leaf); sometimes in overseers' acccount books and sometimes in churchwardens' account books. Sometimes, as in the case of Warbleton, where special endowments concerning the training and education of young children had been made, they were kept in a separate account book, though even in Warbleton the earliest accounts for these private charities have disappeared. The Warbleton bequests show the concern of wealthy parishioners towards poor children, for both Thomas

Stolyon, whose family had owned the manor of Warbleton, and Ann Hawkesworth's bequests were designed to benefit them. Stolyon directed his trustees to 'once in two or three years putt out two poore boyes or girles ... apprentice to some good Trades and at the end of their apprenticeship to allow them a convenient stock for setting up and improving their trades and also ... to portion out poore maids ... in marriage.' Ann Hawkesworth left land in Whatlington, the rents from which were to be applied for putting out poor children 'apprentices to some honest trades and imployments to enable them thereby to gett their livelihoods'. (21)

From the varied sources it seems that there were two types of apprenticeship - the official one, by which children were apprenticed for a certain number of years, with the consent of the justices, when signed indentures were drawn up between the parish officers and the intended master until the young person was 21 or often 24; there were also private apprenticeships, made between potential masters and the often wealthy parents of non-pauper children. These serve to illustrate that it was not only pauper children who were sent away (sometimes a considerable distance) at an early age, to learn a trade. In 1738 James Waller of Alfriston, a mercer, took George Richardson of Godstone, Surrey as an apprentice for seven years. Boys whose parents wished them to be apprenticed to the very best masters were often sent to London in the same way as John Jenner, son of Thomas Jenner of Arlington, who was

apprenticed in 1718 to John Challoner, a citizen and apothecary of London. (22)

It is difficult to discover where pauper children were sent, because of the paucity of apprenticeship records, but those that do exist suggest that these children were very often found a place in or near their parish of settlement. In December 1663 Ellinor Walnett of Berwick 'a poor child of the age of twelve years' was indentured to William Dobson, yeoman of the same parish, 'until her age of twenty-one years or day of marriage'. (23) Ten apprenticeship indentures relating to Heathfield parish (three for girls and seven for boys), covering the years 1673-1757 have survived. Five of the children did not move from Heathfield. Only one was sent any distance away. This was Samuel Winfield who went to Bethersden in Kent to be instructed in the art, mystery and trade of husbandman - the usual apprenticeship for pauper boys, though two from Heathfield were instructed in other trades. One was to become a cordwainer and one a collier. Other boys were sent to Wadhurst, Hailsham and Ringmer - all within ten miles of Heathfield. One girl, Mary Gower, went to Chiddingly, where she may have been apprenticed to a relative, since the name of her master was John Gower, a tailor. Mary, however, was not to learn tailoring, but housewifery - the fate of the two other girls. (24)

Sometimes girls who benefited from Ann Hawksworth's charity at Warbleton were apprenticed to a dressmaker or (as it was more grandly called) a mantua maker, but this was a more

expensive apprenticeship and beyond the means of parish officers who did not have the backing of a private charity. (25) A study of Lewes pauper apprentices from 1652-1834 shows that about one third stayed in Lewes, while the average distance travelled by the remaining two thirds was twelve miles. These figures substantiate the finding that in Eastern Sussex pauper apprentices were rarely sent far from their parish of settlement. Since Lewes was a thriving town where assizes and quarter sessions were held, a far greater variety of trades was available to the pauper apprentices. (26) About half the Lewes children were apprenticed between the ages of twelve and fourteen.

The sums paid to a prospective master varied widely. Those at Heathfield ranged from £7 to £4, though in many cases the sum agreed is not mentioned. At Hellingly in 1701 Samuel Stoneham was put out to John Vine for seven years and the overseers agreed, 'we are to pay John Vine forty shillings next easter and he is to clothe him at the end of the term with two suits according to custom.' In the same year John Pankhurst was apprenticed to Solomon Filder 'until he is the age of 24 years. We are to pay £12. That is to say £4 next Easter and £4 the Easter following and £4 the Easter after. Hee the said Sol. Filder at the end of the term is to find him double apparrell of all sorts.' (27)

The requirement that the master should find the apprentice two suits of clothing when the indentures expired

was general and was probably expected because parishes went to some expense to provide clothes for young people when they were about to be apprenticed. Thomas Tourle, overseer in Arlington in 1721 went to Newhaven 'a putting Ed Skinner prentice'. Edward was ten years old. The journey cost two shillings and fourpence. Later the same year Tourle paid John Carman £6 'being the agreement money for taking Ed Skinner prentice'. Edward's indentures cost the parish six shillings and Richard Dulake the Arlington tailor was paid five shillings for making young Edward two pairs of breeches 'before he went prentice.' Ed Skinner had been working for Thomas Crunden the carpenter who had received £9 12s 6d for keeping him. (28) So, although the initial outlay was considerable, Thomas Tourle had done well for the parish. Edward Skinner would be settled in Newhaven and Arlington would no longer be expected to provide for him. Probably the only advantage to Skinner, except a new parish of settlement, would have been two suits of clothes at the end of his apprenticeship; for it is probable that pauper children (and they seem to have been the majority) who were trained as husbandmen or, in the case of girls, in the art of housewifery, were used as unpaid servants. Pauper children did not write letters describing their lives in their new abode - at least none written by a Cuckmere apprentice has survived - and the unhappiness or pleasure they felt in their new homes is unrecorded. One boy, David Honeysett of Warbleton, did run away from his master twice, in October and December 1721. (29) To summon up the courage

to do this, he must have been desperate, and his actions suggest not only that he was badly treated by his new master, but that he still regarded Warbleton, where he had been looked after as a pauper child, as his home. His treatment by the Warbleton overseers cannot have been too harsh.

Boarding Out

Annual agreements, usually to cover the years from the time the child was seven until it might be indentured, were also made for boarding out pauper children and in the case of these yearly agreements, the child normally stayed within the parish, or in a neighbouring one. The child's labour was expected as part of the deal. As in the case of apprenticeships, the amounts paid by the parish varied considerably - presumably regulated by the age of the child and in consideration of the amount of work he or she could be expected to perform, but in the early years of the eighteenth century £4 seems to have been the amount generally accepted. This decreased considerably by the 1760s. In April 1712 Heathfield overseers agreed with Jeremiah Mephram 'to keep John Luck till 30th April next for fouer pounds and ten shillings. Mephram to keep him in all manner of clothing for the year'. At the end May in the same year they agreed to pay John Richardson of Mayfield (a neighbouring parish) 'to maintain Mary Weller with all manner of meet and drink and all manner of clothing till Eastear for £3'. (30)

On the whole, boarding out for the year was more costly than putting a child out as an apprentice, because the payments continued year after year, so the provision of clothes was again an affair of considerable importance, so much so, that during the course of the century some inhabitants would take children for nothing, provided the parish clothed them. The Chiddingly vestry book for the year 1769 contains a list of children boarded out. Altogether there were twenty children from twelve different families. All the masters were paying land tax in Chiddingly. The highest outlay for keeping a child for a year was £4 10s 0d. Some masters kept the children for nothing, but in these cases the parish paid for the child's clothes. (31) In Arlington in 1725, there were several pauper children boarded out in the parish. They included John Snatt, aged thirteen, who had a widowed mother. Thomas Tourle was to keep John for £2 5s 0d for the year and it was agreed that 'if his mother done cloath him the parrish will'. The local tailor Henry Hasting was to keep fourteen-year-old Hannah Wimble for £2 10s 0d 'and deliver in good repair'. (32) In Alfriston in May 1722 it was 'agreed by the vestry that Mr. Edward Barnard shall have 18d per week for keeping Mary Akehurst and to keep her clothes mended ... until she is otherwise provided for'. The provision of clothes for boarded children evidently rankled in Alfriston, for it was the subject of a further vestry minute in March 1752, when it was agreed 'that such inhabitants who take poor people's children in their houses

shal not charge the parish any thing for their board in consideration of which they shal not be rated anything towards the cloathing of the said poor children.' (33)

It does seem that the provision of clothes for the pauper boarders was of greater importance than the premiums received, because growing youngsters were expensive to clothe. The promises to keep Mary Akehurst's clothes 'mended' and to deliver Hannah Wimble 'in good repair' suggest that a great deal of darning and patching went on. Walter Gale, the master in charge of the charity school at Mayfield in the middle of the eighteenth century referred to his scholars as 'a ragged congregation' - probably an apt description for poor children living in the Cuckmere Valley at the same period. In 1766 Mr. Samuel Boyes had offered Edward Geer a 17-year-old pauper from Arlington the job of ox-boy for a year, on condition that the parish supplied three shirts, one waistcoat, one round frock, a pair of breeches, two pairs os stockings, a pair of shoes and a new hat. Boyes insisted that he 'can't well doe with less the boy being very short at present'. (35) The letter supports the theory that pauper adolescents were not well clad.

The evidence suggests that by the 1760s the problem of placing pauper children had increased by considerable proportions. Fewer apprenticeships appear to have been made, while more young people required to be boarded out. The Hellingly overseers' accounts in this decade provide evidence of growing pressure on the inhabitants, some of

whom were taking two children and receiving only ten shillings a year for each child. There seems to have been a growing recognition - although somewhat begrudging - that older children deserved some personal reward for their services and that, like David Honeysett of Warbleton, they were not willing victims of their circumstances. In 1768 Elizabeth Carder agreed to keep Anne Stephens 'and give her wages 7/6d', while Mr. Merricks had bargained with the parish in connection with Jane Geer, to whom he promised ten shillings and sixpence, 'provided she stays the whole year and if she behaves amiss and goes away is to have nothing'. Eight years later James Merricks was still driving the same kind of bargain. In 1776 he agreed to keep William Bishop for a year and to give him fifteen shillings wages and 'if he behaves well - £1.' The parish was to provide clothing. (36) The agreements made to pay these young people for their work may have been due to a national improvement in the attitude towards the under-dog. Pamphleteers criticised the operation of the Old Poor Law and there was general concern about workhouse conditions. It was the period when Jonas Hanway's work to better the condition of foundling children reached its culmination. In this he found support from one Justice of the Peace who owned land in the Cuckmere. The correspondence of Rose Fuller of Brightling contains many letters which prove his interest in the Foundling Hospital. (37)

Charity Schools

The instruction given to pauper children by their

masters and employers was, in most cases, the only education they received. Most learned something about farming or housekeeping; those who had been apprenticed to cordwainers or colliers may have been able to learn a trade, but very few would have learned to read and still fewer to write. There were schools in the Cuckmere Valley during this period and some of them were charity schools, founded for poor children. Cox in his Sussex mentions one at Waldron 'for how many children and how maintained we are not informed'. Waldron parish register records the burial in February 1679 of John Soane from Ninfield, a schoolmaster 'sometime of one of the Universities' but this is not proof that he actually taught at Waldron. (38)

One other school mentioned by Cox was at Seaford, 'for the teaching of twelve poor boys, which is much encouraged by the neighbouring Gentlemen, of whom one, not long since, gave five pounds to purchase Bibles for the children, and others to pay for their schooling'. The school at Seaford, like other institutions in the borough, was very much under the control of the Pelhams and by 1765 there had evidently been another injection of capital. Newcastle's correspondence for that year includes 'A list of the charity children in the school of Seaford Given by His Grace the Duke of Newcastle and the Members of Parliament'. The list of the names of twenty-five children (girls as well as boys) is preceded by the names of their parents - all of whom, it must be concluded, voted for the Pelham candidate in

parliamentary elections.(39) Seaford had few poor and it is unlikely that these charity children, who received instruction at the hands of Benjamin Stevens, were really impoverished.

There were other schools in the area. Some isolated payments were made to a Mr. Cooper and Mrs. French 'for schooling' by the Alfriston churchwardens in 1768 and 1769, but no explanation of the nature of the schooling financed is given.(40) A charity school at Heathfield was held in the south aisle of the church. This school may have been started at the end of the sixteenth century - a very early foundation - for a schoolmaster of Heathfield, Tristram Sicklemore, had been licensed to teach boys grammar and writing in 1588 and in 1612 Richard Page junior of Heathfield, a schoolmaster in the arts of ciphering and writing and in the principles of the English tongue had been licensed.(41) Certainly the school existed in 1684, for John Fuller was presented 'for keeping fires in a schoolhouse adjoyning to the church by reason whereof the church is discoloured by the smoake and in danger of being burnt'; at Easter three years later Thomas Horscroft of Hooe was indicted before the ecclesiastical court 'for setting his horse in the school house belonging to the parish church of Heathfield'.(42) At Easter 1710 the churchwardens reported that 'some tiles are blown off the schoolhouse being part of the church'.(43) There is no mention of the school in the churchwardens' accounts and nothing is known of its endowment.

The Rev. James Davies, who had been the successful candidate for the Hellingly living in 1742 had gained the approbation of the vestry by announcing that he intended to start a school.(44) Although the exact nature of the foundation is not known, it is possible that he achieved his purpose, for items accounted for the the churchwardens' accounts in 1744 include a payment for bricks for the school house.(45) In the 1830s T.W. Horsfield recorded that a charity school had been established in the parish and that it was supported by subscriptions.(46) There is no proof that any of the pauper children living in Hellingly in the eighteenth century benefited 'from this foundation, although other charity schools in the area supported by subscriptions did cater for poor children. This was certainly the case at Mayfield, where Walter Gale made no secret of his lukewarm attitude to pauper pupils. In other East Sussex charity schools paying students received preferential treatment.(47) If schoolmasters at Cuckmere schools had similar feelings to those of Gale, it is unlikely that the pauper children were able to learn a great deal. In any event, the aspirations of the founders of charity schools were never particularly high. Usually they felt that poor children should be taught to read the Bible, as knowledge of the scriptures would make them humble and obedient. Charity girls were also taught sewing 'in order to make them good servants'. Even Edward Lightmaker, a newpew of Bishop Leighton and the most kindly of benefactors, founder

in 1708 of a charity school at Horsted Keynes, where the pupils received a plum cake at the end of term, had limited aims, 'My chief end and design is to have these poor children instructed in the happy rudiments of Christian knowledge, that may make them wise unto salvation.' The church promoted the belief that the poor could expect no comfort in this life and that their only hope was that their suffering might enhance their chance of salvation in the next. The treatment of pauper children in the Cuckmere was severe and they can rarely have been happy, but in keeping with the standards and ethics of the time, they were treated no more harshly and often a great deal better than their counterparts elsewhere in the country. Their lot may even have shown some improvement towards the end of the period, when, as the Hellingly records indicate, some children - providing they behaved well - were actually paid for their labour.

CHAPTER XIII - REFERENCES - SUFFER, LITTLE CHILDREN!

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CHAPTER XIV

THE CHURCHWARDENS

Able Men of Good Life

In 1635 Archbishop Laud, as part of his measures to reform the Church of England, had decreed that special care should be taken in the choice of churchwardens and that 'able men and such as are of good life and conversacion be chosen.' (1) It was a responsible position for not only were churchwardens 'the proper guardians or keepers of the parish church'; but they had, by the Poor Law Act of 1601, been made responsible with the overseers, for the care of the parish poor; in matters of moral behaviour they were watchdogs for the ecclesiastical authorities and were bound to present anything amiss in their parish, including adultery, incest, drunkenness, and many other types of immorality. (2) In the absence of the incumbent - and it has been seen that this was a frequent occurrence - the churchwardens were the chief local representatives of the Church.

Sometimes it was the resident gentry who served as churchwardens and as overseers too, although the more opulent among them appear to have avoided these offices, in spite of the fact that, according to common law, any parishioner chosen was compelled to serve. (3) Possibly those who ranked high in parish esteem were able to prevent their fellows from voting them into office, if they did not wish to be pressed into service. The Cuckmere evidence suggests that the authority bestowed by appointment as

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churchwarden gave its holders a certain superiority over their fellows, and some aspiring parishioners considered it a route to upward mobility.

During the 1670s Warbleton churchwardens had problems with the many dissenters who lived in the parish. They also had an internal battle among themselves. In 1674 John Turner, a former churchwarden, accused John Elliott the current holder of the office of cheating the poor. Elliott and Samuel Store, the other churchwarden currently in office, responded by presenting Turner for slander and for causing discord among his neighbours. The following year Turner was again presented (this time by Store and John Wood, who had replaced Elliott as churchwarden) for refusing to hand over an account book. Turner's resentment was so great that he refused to attend church and was presented for that offence too.(5) The series of presentations in successive years, for different offences, suggests that Turner was the victim of a personality clash and that someone was determined to vilify him. The quarrel was not resolved, for some fifteen years later when Store was churchwarden again, he and Richard Sharples presented Turner for several offences including drunkenness, blasphemy and destroying the charity bread. The affair was pursued in the Archdeaconry Court at Lewes, and depositions were taken from several parishioners and from Anthony Nethercott, the absentee rector of Warbleton. It seems to have been established that Turner was over-fond of alcohol, but the

continuation of a protracted quarrel of this kind does not speak well for the Christian virtues of the churchwardens, or for their ability to act as moral leaders in the parish. (6)

Samuel Store, one of the chief protagonists and a man who was appointed to office several times, was born in Warbleton in 1643, the son of a tailor, Joseph Store, who had also been a churchwarden, and as a member of the clothworking trade, which was already beginning to fail in the Weald, he was probably not very wealthy. In 1665 he lived in a house with two hearths. In 1669 Samuel married Sarah Haselden, the daughter of an East Grinstead yeoman, at St. Thomas' church in Southwark. (7) His presence in London suggests that he may have served his apprenticeship as a mercer in Southwark. Store settled in Warbleton after his marriage, and six children were baptised at Warbleton church between 1671 and 1681, of whom only the two eldest boys survived. When his wife Sarah died in April 1782 he remarried within five months, most probably to acquire some help in bringing up John and Joseph, the two boys. (8) His new bride, Martha Peckham from Framfield, bore Samuel three daughters, of whom the two youngest survived infancy and later married two Warbleton yeomen.

Samuel Store was energetic and ambitious. He was not content simply with parochial office, for he also served the community in other capacities. In 1680, for instance, he was appointed reeve and rent collector for Warbleton Manor by the trustees of Henry Smith's charity and lived in some

splendour in the decaying manor house beside the church and was lessee of part of the manorial demesne.(9) In 1685 he became constable of the hundred of Hawkesborough.(10) Gradually he acquired more land in Warbleton and he also owned property in Heathfield. In 1693 he purchased Pilley Farm, comprising 55 acres, on the outskirts of Warbleton parish.(11) He was trustee or witness to many wills and leases, including those of gentry families, probably because he was literate, but also because he appears to have been a natural leader, who was something of a busybody. However, in spite of all his activities on behalf of his fellows, he omitted to make a will himself, although he was sixty-eight years old when he died.(12)

His inventory shows that the goods in his shop and warehouse were valued at £204 10s 10d. Four appraisers, instead of the usual two, were called in to take the inventory, one of them being William Baldy from Lewes, who was also a mercer. Compared with the inventories of mercers living in Heathfield and Chiddingly, both of whom died within four years of Store, it seems that Samuel's business had been conducted on grander lines. The value of the stock in his shop equalled that of the other two put together. The variety of goods held was enormous and ranged from satin and silk and lace, through lawn, poplins and muslins to soft and coarse woollens. It included holland, twill and various upholstery and household fabrics. As well as the stock of a high class mercer, Samuel Store

also provided the locality with necessities and commonplace articles like tin ware and gingerbread, buttons, tape, thread, ribbon, gloves, hats, sugar, currants, oil, spirits, oatmeal, glasses, combs, rope, indigo, spice, crockery, beehives, carraway, comfits and maple biscuits. He was owed nearly five hundred pounds, which suggests that perhaps he was not a very good business man, or that he had been very generous with his credit. He may have been obliging his neighbours by lending money to them.(13) He died in 1711, and the two previous years had been exceptionally bad harvest years, with a resulting rise in bread prices.(14)

The ebullient Store had flaws in his character and, in common with other parish officers he was not always wholly virtuous. His protracted quarrel with John Turner suggests an unforgiving nature. His failure to make a will suggests that he was forgetful or over-confident. He was also inclined to take advantage of his position of authority in the parish. At a manor court held in 1709 it was presented that Samuel Store had built a shop on the waste of the manor without a licence and also that for thirty years he had refused to pay rent for the lands and tenements which he held.(15) Perhaps he considered that as rent collector he should have been exempt, certainly he seems to have been quite ready to take advantage of an absentee landlord. Store was undoubtedly an 'able man' in the furtherance of his own interests and during his lifetime had improved the family status. His father had been a humble tailor; as a mercer (originally an importer and seller of silks accorded

the courtesy title of 'Mr') Sam had started on the path of upward mobility. He was probably of 'good conversation', but as a moral leader in a parish where for twelve years, from 1683-1695, the rector was an absentee, he seems to have set a poor example. Archbishop Laud might have found him wanting in this respect.

Samuel Store of Warbleton was not the only parish officer to exploit his position. Since dishonesty was often reported or commented upon, while honesty was not, it is easier to find references to crooked parish officers than to those who carried out their duties efficiently and virtuously. William Giles of Dean Place, Alfriston, was also the lessee of Alfriston rectory and the rectorial glebe.(16) As such he was responsible for the repair of the chancel in the parish church. In July 1708 he had been summoned before a church court and had confessed that the 'chancel was very ruinous and much out of reparaire.' He was told to repair the chancel by the following Easter.(17) On Boxing Day 1709 he was appointed as surveyor for Alfriston and at Easter in 1710 he was elected as churchwarden.(18) The vestry seemed totally unmoved by the fact that his past record had shown him to be careless in matters concerning the upkeep of the church. The indictment in 1708, was not the first that had been made against him. His *laissez-faire* attitude was symptomatic of the period.

In special circumstances the judge in the diocesan court allowed churchwardens to remain in office, even though

they had been shown to be inefficient. In July 1718 Henry Miller and William Lidlow of Chiddingly were warned to repair the church steeple. They agreed that it was very much out of repair, but stressed that it was very high and large and greatly decayed and requested that a generous time allowance might be granted to them. Since Chiddingly church has a stone spire they were justified in making this request. They were told to have it repaired by Michaelmas 1719. In October 1719 they again appeared in court and admitted that the steeple was still in need of repair, but that they had provided the materials to rectify this. They were, however, much out of pocket and prayed to be allowed to remain in office until they could finish the work, or be reimbursed for their expenses, because the parishioners were unwilling to pay up until the work was completed. The judge allowed them to remain in office for the remainder of the year, made them swear that they would faithfully execute their task and also admonished them to 'make a tax forthwith to the amount at least of £50.' They were given until Michaelmas 1720 to see that the work was completed. (19)

Alfriston Officers 1661-1672

Even when a comprehensive list of parish officers has been preserved, it is not always possible to discover personal details about the individuals. Sometimes their status or occupation can be traced from wills or taxation and estate records. An attempt was made to discover whether churchwardens were drawn mainly from the gentry, or from tradesmen or yeomen families; how long they stayed in

office and how frequently they served. Alfriston Vestry Book was the basis for a study of parish officers for twelve years from 1661.(20) During this period twenty-nine different men held the three parish offices; of these, seven men held office once only during this particular period. Churchwardens normally held office for two consecutive years. Only three men were appointed to all three offices, (churchwarden, overseer and surveyor) two of them, John Brooke of Winton and Tobias Gyles of Dean Place, were gentlemen and these two were the only churchwardens to remain in office for three years. It has not been possible to trace the domicile of Richard Page the third man to hold all three offices. He was churchwarden from 1661-1663, then overseer, then surveyor and then overseer again. This suggests that in Alfriston election as churchwarden was not regarded as being the culmination of a period of service.

Since Alfriston, as a decaying market town, was more highly populated than other downland parishes, four overseers were elected annually, whose length of office varied. The two surveyors of the highway generally held office for one year only, although two men, William Chittenden of the *Mercer's Arms* and Richard Page served twice. Since the office of overseer was generally held to be the most unpopular, it is surprising that one man, William King, held this position for half the period. In all, he was elected six times and having served for three consecutive years on two occasions, with only one year's

break between, he then had another year's rest and was elected as surveyor. Since King was taxed for only one hearth in 1662, it may have been felt that he had a special affinity with the poor. In all probability he was being put upon by more affluent members of the vestry.

A survey of Alfriston churchwardens for the decade 1770-1780 shows a definite change in the election of parish officers. The vicar's warden, Richard King, tenant of one of the largest farms in the parish held office for the entire period. The position of parish warden was held by seven different men. In a market town it is not surprising that some of these men were tradesmen, like Edward Bodle a carpenter, and James Marchant a tallow chandler.

Hellingly Officers

A similar study of Hellingly officers for the same period 1661-1672 showed that the conditions of service were similar to those pertaining in Alfriston. As well as the two churchwardens, four overseers and two surveyors were appointed annually. The office of churchwarden could be held for two consecutive years, but this was not a hard and fast rule. During the twelve year period the various parish offices were held by forty-two different men - a higher figure than in Alfriston. Nineteen different men served as churchwardens, five of these for two years and fourteen for one year only. Using the hearth tax returns of 1662, it was possible to deduce the comparative wealth of sixteen out of the nineteen men. Although three, John Pettet, the lessee of Hellingly Park, with fourteen flues

and Richard and Edmond Calverley of the Broad, with eight flues each could certainly be considered wealthy, seven of the men who served as churchwarden had two or fewer hearths and although not designated as poor, were certainly far from being rich. (21)

The names of the churchwardens from 1726-1744 were also extracted from the churchwardens accounts. (22) The period covered nineteen years during which sixteen men served. For six years between 1727 and 1732 the churchwardens John Sicklemore and Richard Elphick remained in office but thereafter the office was usually held for two years, when a complete changeover was made, though occasionally some men held office for only one year. Between 1740 and 1742 John Bray and Thomas Westgate, who had already acted as churchwarden for a year, remained in office for three years. All the Hellingly churchwardens during this period had one thing in common. Not one of them had a will proved at Lewes and it was not possible to discover their status or occupations. (This contrasts strongly with the churchwardens at Arlington at the same period.) Later in the century, from 1771-1779 only two men held office as churchwarden. They were both farmers - William Holman of Lealand's farm and John Gower, who was a tenant of the Pelhams at Blackstock farm.

Arlington Churchwardens 1722-1747

A study of the Arlington churchwardens for a twenty-five year period 1722-1747 was based on a volume of

Churchwardens' Accounts, which begin in 1720.(23) The accounts, in common with those of many parishes in this period could more accurately be described as overseers' accounts, since most of the entries relate to the financial arrangements made by the parish officers in their task of dealing with the poor committed to their care. The volume contains no information at all about the upkeep of the church, and only one entry makes any mention of the purchase of bread or wine, and other commodities which it was the business of the churchwarden to provide, and a probable cause of these omissions may have been the amount of labour required of the churchwardens in caring for the poor. However, the names of the parish officers chosen annually at the Easter vestry are recorded, providing the basic information on which to build a more detailed study.

The ancient parish of Arlington covered over five thousand acres of land. The northern part, neatly divided into two almost equal portions by the Cuckmere River - flowing from north to south - was situated on the clay plain of the low weald. A boot-shaped southern appendage at Milton Street, on the eastern side of the river, possessed fertile alluvial soil near the river and about three hundred acres of chalk downland. There was a considerable amount of woodland in the north of the parish - usually retained by the aristocratic landowners. Since grass grew more easily than arable crops, the northern farmers raised cattle and corn was grown mainly for subsistence. Large areas of land were owned by the absentee landlords, consequently, many of

the most important farmers were tenant farmers who provided a shifting elite from whom many of the parish officers were chosen.

Following the natural formation of the land the parish was divided, for taxation purposes in the eighteenth century, into three - the eastern side; the western side; and Milton Street. There were only two churchwardens for the whole parish, but there were usually three overseers and three surveyors - one for each taxation area - and normally three deputies were also elected, though it is not always clear from the accounts whether they deputized as overseers or surveyors.

During the twenty-five year period seventeen different men held office. Only one of them was a tradesman and even he probably farmed as well, since he also owned land. This was Offington Banks, who had been bequeathed a mill 'standing on Milton Down' by his father in 1737.(24) All the other men whose occupations can be traced were farmers. Nine of them served for one year only. Four were re-elected after a few years. Three held office for long consecutive periods between 1722 and 1747. Although one followed the other, it is not possible to tell from the accounts whether they were elected as the peoples' warden, or by the Vicar. The latter seems most probable. They were John Read of Wilbees, gentleman, who was churchwarden from 1722-1728 inclusive; Thomas Tourle served from 1728-1735; and Gerrard Mason of Wick Street Farm, held office

from 1736-1747 inclusive. Read and Mason were owner occupiers and Thomas Tourle was a tenant farmer, although he also owned land of his own and continued to purchase more. The two latter were aspiring yeomen who acquired the status of gentlemen in later years. While John Read, having resigned as churchwarden in 1728 does not appear to have held another parochial office, both Tourle and Mason served as overseer at times when they were not acting as churchwarden and both served as surveyor, sometimes combining this office with that of churchwarden.

John Read was a second generation proprietor of a once important moated house called Wilbees, purchased in the seventeenth century from a member of the Pelham family. His father had died in 1694 and a suitably inscribed memorial to him had been placed in the church.(25) The association with the Pelhams continued and in 1733 Richard Burnett sent Newcastle an assurance of his loyalty, 'I also waited one Mr. Read with your Grace's message ... who will do everything in his power and thinks his parish very safe.'(26) In John Read's case Pelham power and electioneering tactics were brought further into play, for Read was offered another incentive to remain loyal to them. The following month he dined with Sir William Gage at Firle, when the Hon. Henry Pelham (the Duke's brother and candidate in the election) was also present and asked Read 'whether he should like to have his son provided for in London instead of making him clerk to the Commissioners of the Land Tax.'(27) It is not known if Richard Read was granted a

preferment, but his father may have been in financial difficulties as Wilbees was mortgaged for £500, to John Fuller of Heathfield, a loyal Pelham supporter related to the other John Fuller, the opposition candidate. (28) Read died in 1738 and Wilbees was sold by his daughter's son, John Rawlinson of Bristol in 1765. (29).

Thomas Tourle was probably the son of a Lewes butcher of the same name. His father had married Sarah Dobson, an Arlington girl of good family in 1675. By 1722 Thomas was the most highly rated man in Arlington since he was the tenant of a considerable amount of land. In the Milton Street area he was assessed for Mr. Fuller's land, which apart from Milton Farm, and one other farm let to Robert Lamb, was the largest holding in Milton Street. It had been purchased by John Fuller from Sir Thomas Dyke in 1712 and comprised 183 acres, called at that time Howards and Chawhams. Part of the land was in Wilmington parish. This portion was, in fact, the only piece of land in Wilmington with frontage on to the Cuckmere River. The area in Arlington parish lay immediately to the west of Whiteings lane and south of Moorshill Lane, which at this time was part of the old coach road from Eastbourne to Lewes. (30)

In the eastern part of the parish of Arlington Thomas Tourle was rated 'for the Passnige' and for two other pieces of land besides his own. The Parsonage land, belonging to the Prebendary of Woodhorne included Stapleys Farm House, where Tourle probably lived. Some of the

parsonage land was contiguous to the farm he was renting from the Fullers. There is little doubt that Thomas Tourle was upwardly mobile, and he was clearly one of the most active members of the vestry. Between 1720 and 1741 he was elected overseer four times and surveyor nine times. As well being churchwarden for one lengthy period, he also held the office for a single year on two other occasions. He certainly did not shirk the lesser offices although these were generally most unpopular. He does not appear to have used his position as surveyor to his own advantage. In 1724 he was indicted at Quarter Sessions for not repairing the highway leading from Shebbards lane to his house and two years later he was again indicted for a similar offence regarding another approach road, although on this occasion he was no longer surveyor. (31) Since he had been acting as surveyor on the first occasion, his failure to repair the road near his home may be taken as a sign of his honesty, since he could easily have used the parish funds and labour to have repaired this piece of road. It was most probably Tourle who purchased the Overseer's Account Book commenced in 1720, for the sum of five shillings, and he appears to have been responsible for many of the entries. When the Vestry authorized the building of the workhouse at Caneheath in 1733, it was Thomas Tourle who was responsible for keeping the accounts - he was churchwarden - and the accounts suggest that he was the organiser of the whole undertaking. His eldest daughter, Anne, was not baptised in the parish, but in the years between 1724 and 1740 her nine

siblings were. His eldest son Thomas - following in his father's footsteps as an active member of the vestry - was appointed surveyor in 1742, when he was only eighteen years of age. In 1744 Anne Tourle made a very good match, marrying Mr. Walter Woodhams of Lullington. (32)

In August 1733 when Newcastle's agent Richard Burnett visited Mr. Read, Read expressed his doubts about Tourle's allegiance to the Duke. It is not clear whether Burnett realised that Tourle was renting land from Fuller though he described him as 'very impertinent'. The Pelham party, through their alliance with the Duke of Dorset, had a hold over Tourle. Burnett wrote to Newcastle, 'Mr. Tourle of Arlington may easily be made if the Duke of Dorset forbears signing a lease which is ready drawn up of the best farm he has... the least check that way would reduce him.' (33)

Dorset owned two farms in Arlington, Michelham and Milton Street, both were large and it is probable that the one at Milton Street, since it contained land on the downs, might have been considered the better of the two. A lease of this farm would have added a further five hundred acres to Tourle's holdings. In any event, Tourle was aiming high and a less 'impertinent' man might have been afraid to bargain with two such powerful landowners as the Fullers and the Sackvilles. By the end of the century Thomas Tourle, or his son, owned sheep leases on Milton down in his own right. He had also purchased other property in Arlington and was styled 'gentleman'. (34)

Gerrard Mason, the third man in Arlington to hold office as churchwarden for a long continuous period, was also a member of the aspiring yeomanry. The first record of the family in connection with Arlington appears in a Bishop's Transcript in June 1680, when Jerrard Mason and Elizabeth Welch were married by licence. In 1699 Jerrard Mason, yeoman, was indicted at Quarter Sessions with others for the crime of pulling up posts and rails and spoiling hedges on land belonging to Mary Olliver, widow. Mrs. Olliver was evidently suspected by her neighbours of enclosing common land and Mason was the local leader determined to see that justice was done.(35) Soon after, he was once more in trouble for not brushing his hedges and scouring his ditches. His first wife died in 1700 and two years later he married Dorothy Heasman.(36) In 1703 he was leasing part of Old Claverham Farm from Thomas Medley.(37) His second wife died soon after giving birth to their second daughter in 1705. No third marriage was recorded in Arlington, but in 1710 Gerard, the son of Gerard and Anne Mason was baptised in Arlington church. In 1714 the Masons rebuilt Wick Street Farm.(38) Gerrard Mason died in 1732. During the period from 1722 he served as surveyor twice, as overseer once and as churchwarden once.

His son Gerrard Mason II inherited when he was only twenty-six. The following year he served as overseer and in 1736, at the age of thirty, he began his lengthy term as churchwarden. During this period he also acted as surveyor on three occasions. He and his wife Elizabeth had seven

children born in Arlington. He enlarged the house at Wick Street, possibly because it was too small for his large family. In all the references to the baptisms and burials of his children he was referred to as 'Mr' Gerrard Mason in the parish register. When he died in 1778, he was styled 'gentleman' in his will. He bequeathed fifty shillings to the poor of Arlington to be distributed 'to such as have no relief from the parish' - an corroboration of the evidence that after 1770 the parish purse was stretched to the limits and could no longer accommodate all the demands made on it. (39) Mason's will shows that as well as owning Wick Street Farm, he also possessed Sessingham Farm, land in Hailsham and several odd pieces of land elsewhere in Arlington. The table tombs of the Mason family, close to the eastern side of Arlington church porch, reflect the status and success of this family. Gerrard Mason III, who inherited much of the property was later styled 'Esquire'. In view of their growing prestige it is surprising that the Masons were not mentioned in the Duke of Newcastle's election correspondence. The Tourles and the Masons both achieved social elevation during the course of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The success of these families shows that in Arlington it was possible for enterprising yeomen to achieve gentry status during this period, and it is interesting that men from both families served lengthy periods as churchwarden.

Change in Berwick

During the years 1660-1672 there had been a great number of different churchwardens in Berwick. (40) Although the records for some of these years are incomplete, the entries for the remaining eight years show that at least fifteen different men were elected to the office. Apart from Henry Foster, who served for three years and William Allen, who served for two, new churchwardens were elected annually. Henry Foster, who was churchwarden from 1660-1663 and overseer in 1666 and his brother William, who served as churchwarden in 1666 and 1673, were both husbandmen. Although no burial is recorded for Henry, William died in 1676 leaving Henry's daughter £10 0s 0d and requesting his executor - who was bequeathed £8 0s 0d for the purpose - to provide her with meat and drink and clothes until she reached the age of twenty-one. (41) At this period there were several husbandmen in Berwick who served as parish officers, but during the eighteenth century their number declined as their smallholdings were purchased and included in larger farms by the Dykes and the Fullers. A list of all the farms in Berwick, drawn up in 1784 shows that by this date the Fullers had acquired land which had formerly belonged to five different farms. (42)

In the early years of the eighteenth century, between 1705 and 1710 two men held office as churchwarden for long consecutive periods. They were Richard Barnden, a carpenter, and George Ranger. Barnden was churchwarden again in 1716 and 1717 and when he died in 1722 he was

acting as parish clerk.(43) His inventory indicates that he also farmed in a very small way for he owned a pig, three sheep and one lamb. The position of parish clerk allowed the holder of that office to graze some sheep on Berwick down. He was not a very wealthy man. The sum total of his goods amounted to £18 7s 3d.(44)

In 1711 a new family of tenant farmers arrived in Berwick and settled at Berwick Farm, owned by the Fullers. Almost immediately Samuel Stace, although he could not write his name, was elected as churchwarden. He remained in office for three years and thereafter served frequently but intermittently as churchwarden, overseer and surveyor. His son, also called Samuel, who succeeded him at Berwick Farm, was churchwarden from 1738-1744 and like his father served frequently as overseer and surveyor.(45) Another tenant holding a smaller portion of the Fuller estate was Samuel Piper, who was an almost permanent fixture as churchwarden from 1732 to 1767. For several years after 1738 he and Samuel Stace had a monopoly on this office. After 1744 other men were elected for short periods, including William Levett who owned Berwick mill and Henry Hall, the tenant at Berwick Court.(46) It is apparent that in Berwick election to the office of churchwarden became more and more exclusive. Gradually smallholders and tradesmen disappeared from the parish, leaving the tenants of the important farms to organise parochial affairs. This was a normal pattern in downland parishes in the eighteenth

century.

The Beans of Litlington

In the smaller downland parishes of Lullington and Litlington and West Dean no parochial records (except the parish registers) have survived for this period. The only references to the existence of churchwardens are to be found in the scanty records of ecclesiastical visitations. In all three parishes the pattern is the same. The office of churchwarden was usually held by the tenants of the largest farms. In West Dean it was the Allfrey family of Charlston Farm and in Lullington it was the Woodhams family at Lullington Court.(47) The Woodhams family held this farm from the Dukes of Dorset for over two hundred years and during the nineteenth century Walter Woodhams, who was both churchwarden and overseer, was asked why he did not charge his expenses to the parish, to which Woodhams replied that as the only ratepayer he would have to pay the expenses to himself.(48) No doubt, conditions were the same in Lullington in the later eighteenth century, although the Hearth Tax returns of 1662 show that there were several tax payers in Lullington at that time.(49) As in Berwick, the population appears to have decreased between 1660 and 1780.(50)

A number of estate records relating to Litlington make it possible to trace the take-over of the village by a single family during the eighteenth century.(51) In 1670 twelve families in the parish paid Hearth Tax. The occupier of a property with one hearth was Thomas Beane.(52)

In 1690 and from 1696-8 inclusive Henry Bean, who was probably the son of Thomas, was churchwarden. In 1694 he was the occupier of Clapham House and farm, an estate based on a former manor, where he remained as the tenant until 1713.(53) In 1713 Clapham farm was leased to John Bean for a short term, which was amended to fifty years in a lease made in 1716. John Bean was described as a farmer, and it is made clear that he was the son of Henry Bean the previous tenant.(54) In 1724, 1725 and 1727 John Bean was churchwarden.(55) Later he moved to Frogfirie in Alfriston as a tenant farmer. He served as churchwarden and overseer in Alfriston on several occasions, but continued to hold the Litlington property, which occupied the opposite bank of the Cuckmere to Frogfirie.(56) His will, proved in 1750 shows that he had begun to buy up small properties in Litlington including a messuage, malthouse, garden and croft of land from Walter Barnden.(57)

His son John Bean II, born in about 1716, inherited and in 1756 purchased Litlington Manor.(58) In 1762 he obtained a small property in Litlington from Richard Ockenden, a victualler, and his wife.(59) It is not clear when John Bean II took up residence in Litlington, but he was certainly living there by 1768, when he made his will and he may have taken up residence on the death of his father.(60) In 1771 he purchased the manor of Clapham and Clapham Farm from Lancelot Harrison of Sutton in Seaford.(61) This transaction concluded John Bean II's

purchases in Litlington, although his son John Bean III continued to buy up small properties in the parish until practically the whole village was in the possession of the Bean family. Owing to the paucity of parochial and episcopal records it has not been possible to discover whether John Bean II ever held office as churchwarden, as a man in his position in a Downland parish almost certainly would have done. However, his will makes it plain that he was living with his housekeeper, by whom he had two illegitimate children who were legally adopted by him. This lapse might have precluded him from serving as churchwarden.

His son, John Bean III, who became High Sheriff of Sussex in 1788, wrote his father's monumental inscription in which he claimed that John Bean II was 'a gentleman well known for his superior judgement as a farmer and grazier and for his great punctuality in business in general... he was a good master to his servants and ever attentive to the poor, but a man of no ostentation, his principal object was that of husbandry, wherein its allowed he made great improvements... the bulk of his fortune he made chiefly by his own industry and good management.' (62) As an improving farmer and grazier, John Bean II was following a national trend and may even have pioneered the way for a younger but more famous Sussex farmer, the renowned John Ellman of Glynde. (63)

Cuckmere churchwardens were not always men of blameless character. Some undoubtedly took advantage of their position, some seem to have revelled in it, some were

probably heartily glad when their year of office came to an end. When they adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude, which they undoubtedly did in their capacity as guardians of church buildings, it was because this was an attitude engendered by the higher clergy. It was also due to lack of funds, which were diverted to assuage a problem of increasing national urgency - the relief of the poor. Though the conditions under which they served differed considerably from parish to parish and through the passage of time, most Cuckmere churchwardens appear to have carried out their duties honestly. In all parishes, both Wealden and Downland there was a change in the status of churchwardens from the early years in the 1660's, when men of quite humble position served in this office, to the later years of the eighteenth century, when those elected were usually gentlemen, or successful tradesmen or aspiring yeomen, who having been elected continued to hold office for many years. This switch was another manifestation of the fission between social groups within a parish, already evident in changing attitudes towards the poor.

CHAPTER XIV - REFERENCES - THE CHURCHWARDENS

- 1) B.L. Add Mss 39444 f.15.
- 2) W.E. Tate, *The Parish Chest* (1974) 84 & 95.
- 3) Tate 87.
- 4) Chapter VIII; Chapter X.
- 5) Ed. H. Johnston *Churchwardens Presentments* SRS 50 (1949) 34; WSRO Ep II 17.
- 6) WSRO EP/II 5/19 ff.19 & 23.
- 7) ESRO PAR 501 .1.1.2; M. Beswick, *Leather & Cloth*, (Warbleton and District History Group 1985) 29; ESRO XA 5/2; ESRO W A.40/143.
- 8) Laslett found that once a man reached marriage age he he tended to continue getting married whenever he found himself without a partner. (P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (1971) 104.)
- 9) Surrey Record Office, Kingston, Accession 2840.
- 10) ESRO QR/E.225 f.129.
- 11) ESRO ASH 193a; BAT 18.
- 12) ESRO W B.15/77v.
- 13) ESRO W/Inv 417 & 676, ESRO W/Inv 195 (Samuel Store); Probate inventories from Lincolnshire, Leicestershire Norfolk and Cambridge at this period show that 40% listed debts owed to the testator. Money lending on a local basis was widespread in the absence of developed banking. (K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680*, (1984) 52,) and Mingay also suggests that local gentry, freeholders, clergy and tradesmen borrowed money among themselves on a considerable scale. (G.E Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1963) 86.)
- 14) J.M. Stratton *Agricultural Records AD 220-1927*, (1978) 66-71.
- 15) Surrey Record Office, Kingston Accn 2840.
- 16) ESRO SAS FA/954.
- 17) B.L. Add Mss 39445 f.10.
- 18) ESRO AMS 5567/1.
- 19) B.L. Add Mss 39447 ff.54/5.
- 20) ESRO AMS 5567/1.
- 21) ESRO PAR 375/12/1; M. Burchall *Sussex Hearth Tax Assessments 1662 No.2. Pevensey Rape* (Sussex Genealogical Centre, Brighton 1980) 47,49,60,63.
- 22) ESRO PAR 375/9/1.
- 23) ESRO PAR 232/9/1.
- 24) ESRO W.A55/136
- 25) ESRO SAS C.387.
- 26) B.L. Add Mss 32688 f.49.
- 27) B.L. Add Mss 32688 f.303.
- 28) ESRO W.A56/327.
- 29) ESRO SAS C.387.
- 30) ESRO SAS A.2449/23; A.2300.
- 31) ESRO QI/EW8.
- 32) ESRO PAR 232.1/1/2.
- 33) B.L. Add Mss 32688 ff 49 & 94.

- 34) ESRO SAS ADA 51; SAS G.20/161 & 191.
- 35) ESRO QI/EW7.
- 36) ESRO PAR 232/1/1/2.
- 37) B.L. Add Mss 38484.
- 38) Initials on Date Stone on front of Wick Farm.
- 39) ESRO W.A63/891.
- 40) SAS Library B.20. W. Budgen *Transcript of Berwick Parish Records*.
- 41) ESRO W.A34/245.
- 42) ESRO PAR 239/7/8.
- 43) ESRO PAR 239/1/1/1.
- 44) ESRO W.Inv 1481.
- 45) SAS Library B.20; E.B. Ellman, 'Monumental Inscriptions Berwick', SAC XII (1860) 254.
- 46) SAS Lib. B.20; ESRO Berwick ELT; SAS RF/6; W.A63/727.
- 47) WSRO EPII/10/28.
- 48) E.B.Ellman *Recollections of a Sussex Parson* (1912) 159.
- 49) PRO E.179/191/410.
- 50) ESRO SAS D.611; SRS 29.
- 51) The figures are based on nine-year moving averages compiled for the three parishes from the parish registers 1660-1800.
- 52) PRO E.179/191/410.
- 53) ESRO Bishop's Transcripts Litlington; SAS C.496; D.611/7/2.
- 54) ESRO D.611/7/3 & 4.
- 55) WSRO Ep II 10/28.
- 56) ESRO AMS 5567/1.
- 57) ESRO W.A58/152; C.506.
- 58) ESRO D.611//1/15-19.
- 59) ESRO D.611/9/3 & 4.
- 60) ESRO W.A61/737.
- 61) ESRO D.611/2/6 & 7.
- 62) SAS Library Dunkin 61 M.I. Litlington.
- 63) J. Lowerson, *A Short History of Sussex*, (1980) 126.

CONCLUSION

In the years between 1660 and 1780 the Church exercised a strong influence on the lives of people in the Cuckmere Valley. Although its power deteriorated in the religious sense, because of the indifference of the higher clergy and the absenteeism, or poverty, of the lesser clergy, it increased in the sociological sense, mainly because the numbers of the poor increased during the period and poor relief was organised through parish officers, who were members of local vestries. Cuckmere communities were also affected by the presence in the valley of a considerable number of dissenters. These people were single-minded, dedicated and deeply religious; towards their needy followers they were determined arbiters of moral standards and caring providers of charity. The existence of the two groups - supporters of the established church and non-conformists - created a schism in parish life which was never healed. It was the forerunner of other, possibly more lasting, rifts in social relationships, which were to widen in the nineteenth century.

The eighteenth century may be equated with elegance, the great country house, and the rule of aristocratic or gentry landowners, who offered paternalistic patronage to unified rural communities. The nineteenth century evokes notions of gloom, poverty, industrialisation, the rule of the *bourgeoisie* and class struggle. Research on the Cuckmere Valley between 1660 and 1780 suggests that a

change in the nature of rural society had commenced before the end of the eighteenth century and that by 1780, if not before, divisions within local communities had polarised.

It has been possible, in this study, to challenge the veracity of some received concepts regarding rural society, especially those which accept debauched clergy and sadistic parish officers as the norm, but it would be wrong to suggest that life in the Cuckmere Valley between 1660 and 1780 was idyllic. For a majority of the people, life in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was uncomfortable and beset with problems and difficulties; for a large minority it was extremely miserable.

Some of the problems began with the Reformation, which had the adverse effect of dividing local communities. Religion, formerly a unifying element in village life, suddenly became terrifyingly divisive. It has been shown that Richard Woodman, one of the Protestant martyrs of the Reformation, was betrayed by members of his own family. Despite the good intentions of Charles II, religious differences within local communities were exacerbated by the Restoration settlement. For a quarter of a century dissenters were forced to hold their meetings in secret. They were defamed, harried and persecuted by bailiffs and constables, clergy and churchwardens. Spufford has shown that in Cambridgeshire relationships between dissenting sects were extremely bad and it would not be unreasonable to suppose that this was also the case in Sussex.⁽¹⁾ Strong religious convictions frequently generate bigotry and, in a

parish such as Warbleton, which housed Baptists and Quakers and determined clergy, neighbourhood relationships must have been more than a little strained. In fact, there cannot have been a peaceful atmosphere, at this period, in any place where conformists and dissenters lived side by side which, according to Bishop Compton's Census of 1676, they did in every one of the Cuckmere parishes.

Although the number of dissenting meetings near the Cuckmere appears to have declined in the middle years of the eighteenth century, by 1769 a revival (led by George Gilbert) had taken place on the Heathfield/ Warbleton border, which soon spread to Alfriston and Chiddingfold; in 1770 John Gosling of Waldron applied for a licence to hold Baptist meetings 'at a house lately erected for that purpose'. By 1777 Gilbert's congregation at Heathfield had grown to about a hundred and a new chapel had to be built. Between 1809 and 1828 sixteen licences to hold meetings at dissenting chapels in Cuckmere parishes were issued by the Bishop of Chichester and, in the following decade, another eleven were issued.(2) The large number of requests, emanating from nine of the Cuckmere parishes, suggests that during the apparently lean years of the mid-eighteenth century the cause of dissent remained alive in spirit, so it is probable that friction between conformists and between various sects continued. Lower's account of the foundation of Gilbert's meeting verifies the continuation of local antipathy.(3)

A difference of religious opinion was not the only reason for friction. Within the Church of England the gap between higher and lower clergy widened during the eighteenth century as did the gap between the higher clergy and parishioners with whom, since fewer visitations were made, they had less and less contact as the century advanced; nor can the Dean and Chapter or the Prebendaries of Chichester, to whom several Cuckmere rectories were alienated, have been highly regarded by the congregations who worshipped at the churches which they neglected. The lower clergy also had less contact with their flocks, for ecclesiastical policy permitted and even encouraged pluralism - a necessity for impoverished clergy - so that many Cuckmere incumbents were absentees in the eighteenth century.

In parishes where parsons were resident they were often distanced by their gentry status and frequently resented by farmers, because the method of tithe payment was suspect and varied so much from parish to parish. They were often distanced by ambition, which made them neglectful of their pastoral duties and by their education. They rarely 'tally-hoed with the squires'; indeed, if they had, they might have achieved greater ambience with their parishioners - for yeomen and tenant farmers also hunted - but they seem more likely to have spent their time studying in their libraries. Apart from the camaraderie, or enmity, generated during election campaigns, there was a definite gap in parson/parishioner relationships.

In the absence, or withdrawal, of the incumbent the churchwardens were the representatives of the Church and arbiters of moral standards in their parish. Sometimes their morals were questionable. Owing to lack of evidence it is difficult to assess the degree of their religious dedication, but as upholders of the faith they seem never to have possessed the ardour, or the high standard of ethics, shown by the dissenters whom they harried so fiercely. In the seventeenth century their persecution of dissenters, which was encouraged by the laws of the Church which they served, contributed to local friction.

As representatives of the Church, the onus of organising the social services demanded of a parish fell on these men. Some like Thomas Tourle were good organisers; some were subject to pressure from their landlords when an election was imminent; some saw the office as a pathway to prestige, in an age when upward mobility was all important - an age when it was possible for the aspiring farmer to reach a higher rank in society. Tourle's achievement was assisted by a national trend; the agricultural revolution had promoted the belief that a large farm could be more productive than a small one, so smallholders and even yeomen farmers, who were struggling against higher land tax and increasing poor rates, were bought out by capitalist landowners. The larger farms created by these landowners were leased to tenant farmers such as Tourle and this trend widened the social gap between members of local communities.

The saga of the Bean family, covering the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, substantiates the theory that social elevation was open to enterprising men in the Cuckmere area - though perhaps the Beans took slightly longer to achieve success than the Tourles and other Cuckmere families studied. Thomas Beane of Litlington had been bequeathed 'one coate, two pairs of briches of home made cloth and one old doublet' in 1665. In 1670 he had been assessed for one flue; he had been a poor man.(4) In 1690 Henry Bean, almost certainly his son, was churchwarden and tenant of a large farm, already paving the way for the elevation of his descendants - one of whom became Sheriff of Sussex. The success of the Bean family exemplifies the way in which, during the eighteenth century, Sussex Downland smallholdings were annexed into larger farms, if this had not already occurred previously.(5) The take-over of Litlington by the two John Beans in the eighteenth century cannot have been received with enthusiasm locally. It is not possible to tell whether the vendors sold through necessity, or whether they were pressured into parting with their properties, but whatever the reason, the local yeomen and husbandmen who sold out had been deprived of their independence and had been reduced to the status of landless labourers, some of whom may have declined to pauperism.(6) This trend, typical of downland parishes, advanced the polarisation of local society.

In Berwick the take-over by an absentee landlord who installed tenant farmers had the same results. It

undoubtedly made for more efficient farming and this was a national necessity, owing to the rising population and the new mercantilist policies and warlike tendencies of 18th-century governments, but it also caused a reduction in the number of people who could afford to serve as parish officers (another contributory factor to polarisation) and, much more disastrously, de-populated Downland parishes; they changed into 'closed' estate villages - a transformation which was to aggravate problems of poverty and unemployment in the nineteenth century.

Provision for the poor had always been a problem. In the late seventeenth century the Chiddingly overseers had been worried by their responsibilities, but showed humanity towards those who were in need. The Hellingly accounts indicate how disastrously the cost of providing for the poor had increased during the eighteenth century. Nationally there was a growing awareness of the problems of poverty and the nature of pauperism and a flicker of recognition that the poor were individuals with rights, who might not have been responsible for their own misfortune. This was reflected at Hellingly in the payments made to pauper children - always the most vulnerable victims of the Poor Law. However, a vague recognition of a pauper's rights did nothing to minimise the notion that the poor were a group set apart from their fellow parishioners and this alienation increased as the population and the numbers of the poor increased, until in the nineteenth century the New Poor Law

banished (in theory at least) all paupers from their parish.

Even well intentioned overseers and a paternalistic vestry could do little to improve the comfort of the aged poor, the desperation of the unemployed, or the lovelessness of orphaned, bastard, or deserted children. The poor did suffer and it is difficult to judge what proportion of the population of a parish was included under this blanket heading. Spufford suggested that 'the size of the ice-berg of the poverty-stricken ... is difficult to estimate in the early eighteenth century...' (7) For a period in the late eighteenth century, there are clues which can be used to suggest that an astonishingly large proportion of Cuckmere residents were receiving poor relief, because the Arlington and Chiddingly registers recorded the pauper status of those buried. Between 1784 and 1793 in both parishes nearly 50% of the entries were marked with the initial 'P'. (8) Life for nearly half the population was far from idyllic.

Magnate landowners had never lived in the Cuckmere Valley, but the Pelhams and later the Fullers had maintained a presence. When Rose Fuller returned from Jamaica in 1755, his pursuit of a seat in Parliament diverted him to London; in 1763 Government contracts ceased and the Fuller ironworks at Heathfield began to run down. The Fullers became absentee Cuckmere landlords. The Duke of Newcastle's electioneering sorties had provided 'bread and circuses' for clergy and freeholders; his patronage had been enjoyed even by the poor in Seaford. Although the Pelham interest in Seaford elections continued after the Duke's

death in 1768, his Sussex estates were inherited by a cousin who preferred to live at Stanmer, near Brighton. Halland was pulled down; the lavish parties ceased; a unifying venue disappeared.

Many Cuckmere gentry had been idealistic puritans, in common with others of their class in Eastern Sussex, but they had accepted the Reformation settlement and the modified Anglicanism of 1662. They attended church and occasionally bestowed gifts, such as pulpit cloths and cushions. During the eighteenth century they sponsored singing seats and canopied pulpits, which enlivened the services, but they were not, apparently, too concerned with maintaining the fabric of the churches in which they worshipped and which they, as wealthy parishioners, might have saved from decay. They concentrated instead on erecting handsome pews and lavish monuments, thus stressing their isolation from the more humble members of the congregation.

Before 1780 there was a widening rift in communities living in the Cuckmere Valley - an unindustrialised rural area. Churchmen and chapel-goers continued to be divided by religious beliefs; parsons and parishioners were split by absenteeism and class barriers; while the higher clergy were distanced from the lower clergy and their congregations by indifference. Magnate landowners disappeared; the gentry and yeomanry mixed less frequently and tenant farmers ousted smallholders. Churchwardens and overseers - the

administrators of the social services - often rose in the social scale and became more aloof from the poor. As paupers increased in numbers they deteriorated in status and the quality of poor relief worsened as funds became stretched. The appearance of Disraeli's 'two nations', so often equated with industrialisation, was apparent in the Cuckmere Valley by 1780.

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- 3) M.A. Lower, *The Worthies of Sussex*, (1865) 77.
- 4) ESRO W A.30/204; PRO E.179/191/410.
- 5) Dr. Farrant has shown that the Pelhams at Bishopstone and Norton adopted the same policy. (S. Farrant, 'Farm Formation at Bishopstone in the 18th Century,' SAC 114, (1976) 335.)
- 6) S. Farrant, 'Farm Formation at Bishopstone', SAC 114, By the end of the 18th century the majority of the inhabitants of Bishopstone and Norton were occasionally in need of Poor Law assistance.
- 7) Spufford 148.
- 8) ESRO PAR 232/1/1/2; PAR 292/1/1 Transcript. The exact figures were Chiddingly - 117 burials, 53 pauper; Arlington - 50 burials, 29 pauper.

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